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CHAN'S WIFE

A STORY

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A STORY

BY

JESSIE ANDERSON CHASE

BOSTON
MARSHALL JONES COMPANY
1919

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To A. A.

A LITTLE WOMAN
WITH A LARGE COURAGE

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I

FANNY'S IDEA

Chan's Wife

CHAPTER I

FANNY'S IDEA

CHICAGO is a solid, indisputable, even pivotal fact in our American life. Yet a city, like a woman, has her moods; and Chicago cannot escape the elfin dream of her lake lashed against the sea-wall by a November gale on a fitful moonlit night.

Chandler Morton was an artist, fresh from study in Paris; and the ardent young figure of the girl walking beside him, buttoned into a hooded golfcape, pushing manfully against the wind, struck him as like some Rodin chiselling of this young city making her way into our new century. Paris, lover of novelty, had yet been so old. Her charm had been so palpably garnered out of the Middle, even the Dark, Ages of Europe. Her traditions were, to her children, a spun

silk with the tenacity of steel. You knew what a French girl would do. But here —!

It was Chandler's first experience of what, in his Boston childhood, he had been bred to call the West. The experiment had been so thrilling, in the unexpectedness of its frank disclosures, that he felt himself taken off his feet. His old, complacent analyses fitted nowhere. To one definite conclusion about Fanny Ticknor he had, however, come: that her mood was the mood of Chicago, an impatience of slow, underground and rooted processes of ripening beauty; an out-and-out determination to win the Best by snatching it, the methods of the western "boom" not yet outgrown.

Turning over in his mind, as he lent only half an ear to her fragmentary talk, the extraordinary things this girl had said to him, eager and alive and intimate and humorous and self-questioning, he asked himself what it meant. And it came to him that never before had he been so near, so close up against, another human being.

Brought up as a rather lonely little orphan, by a childless uncle and aunt, he could not remember when he had not been wrapped in

his dream of being a painter. Very likable, he had friends — in Boston, his own set; in Paris, art students with whom, more or less intimately, he had lived and worked. But he still kept his thoughts closely within the circle of his personal hope and ambition. How closely had never been revealed, even to himself, till this girl with her unguarded zest for the contacts of life had ignored his guards and seized upon his thought and his vision with open pleasure. To be sure, in taking his ideas, she had given him hers — bushels of them! — and, with all her peculiar and ingenuous seriousness, how they had laughed together! Chan did not remember to have laughed so much in all his twenty-five years as in the past month.

It worried him a little to-night, the way she seemed to possess him. She so little recognized any dividing line. They just saw things together; enjoyed, detested, scrutinized, worshipped, as the case might be, together. The past? They had no common, interwoven traditions. Chan's temperament demanded a foundation for his building. The future?

Imagine, then, the shock to his complacent

musings, like the buffeting of his tall frame by the gusts from the white-capped lake! Shot out by the tension of the girl's will, along with the howling of the storm, yet clear above it, came her vibrant words: "I want to marry you, Chan! — to be your wife!"

Roused from his introspection, he doubted his ears. He bent his extra five inches of height kindly toward the averted gray hood, as he shouted — it must have been his subconscious amazement that dictated the words, for with his conscious hearing he had certainly understood her! — "What, dear?"

Poor, poor Fanny! Her hard-reached heroism crumpled to farce. The tears started, the tensity of her stride slackened, and then, with one of her sudden outbursts, like a sunstorm, she laughed — her unrestrained, irresponsible, contagious laugh, already the dearest thing about her to Chan Morton. In any mood, in any adventure, with Chan she was safe!

"You thought you didn't hear straight!" She reached out to him a small gloved hand under the edge of the flapping cape, and he thrilled at the smallness and the confiding-

ness of it. "Yes, I, Fanny Ticknor, want to marry you, Chandler Morton. I offer myself for what I ask. Why not?" Her voice was vibrant like the night, with strength and audacity, and a sort of elementary harmony. "I was fearfully afraid I shouldn't get up the courage. But I have. And I'm glad!" A great gust of wind seemed to whirl the words like a visible entanglement of their fates through the agency of some big, encircling gravitation — there alone, man and woman, on the wind-swept, wave-battered margin of the lake; where, but for the tall, lighted houses over the way, might lie the original wind-beaten prairie, so primitive was the clinging of the two frail human forms to each other.

"Hadn't we better get in, out of this?" said Chandler, as a wave of spray lashed their faces and fell back.

"Not till we settle this," said Fanny. "I must know."

"We'll walk over to your street, then," replied Chan. "If you won't go in, at least our sentences and our wits can hang together better out of this pandemonium."

"You're a painter-man," said Fanny,

thrusting under her gray hood a stray lock of red-gold hair that blew across her eyes. "Don't you think outdoors is a more fitting background for — innovations — than my blessed old father's rectory?"

"I don't like your saying that," said Chan; "I trust my instincts, for you, understand! I want you to feel your home as your 'background.'"

"Safety first," said Fanny; "it's a man's motto — for women!"

As they turned and had the wind with them, they found progress easier; the parable of which did not escape the girl fighting for self-respect, the core of her impatient spirit, against the current of custom. "What made you?" broke from Chan. "You were so slow," came the quick retort.

And then, more quietly: "Because I wanted what you were afraid of, Chan! You would go back east, close up again — where you've so beautifully 'opened your heart to me' — and let it all slide, till you forgot. What a horrid end of all this that has been so expanding, so good for you, don't you see it? Oh, dear boy, I feel just like a mother to you!"

"And your career, as English Prof. down at the University?"

"I see my career, now, as your wife."

"What a child you are, Fan! I feel like a father to you!"

Fanny did not laugh. All that she felt, all that she demanded, thrilled through her almost involuntary utterance of his name: "Chan!"

The appeal of this, the first time a woman's passion had come home to him, reached something very deep. It was like an ignition spark to an unknown susceptibility in his nature. But — passion? That was just what Chandler Morton had always distrusted. Was it some inheritance of fear, from Puritan forefathers? Or only an instinctive recognition of unfathomed things within him, that might upset carefully studied life-plans! "We'll go over it together, dear!" he spoke guardedly, but Fanny's quick perception noted the trembling in his low-pitched voice. "We're not against each other, you know, but side by side, hand in hand, facing our lives." As he spoke, it came to him, where he had heard that note in a woman's tone before. On the stage — Madame Sara

Bernhardt — it was all that he recalled of the play: "*Que je t'aime! que je t'adore!*" It had not seemed like real life. It was drama, almost melodrama. But Fanny was real enough and alive enough — here, now, demanding that he be real and alive.

They had reached a temporary shelter, in the lee of a church, and Fanny suddenly took one of her headlong slides on the ice. She *was* a child. Characteristically, Chan seized the chance of delay about committing himself. "I understood," he said lightly, "that Dr. Pellett preached, in there, the other Sunday, on Civic Righteousness and keeping your sidewalk clean. He should take some of his own pills! What kind of church is it anyway? Sounds practical."

"Unitarian, or Undenominational, or something," said Fanny, humoring his mood, and for the moment glad herself of respite. "That sort of thing is bad taste, don't you think? Makes you glad to belong to the Establishment!"

"Gracious!" said Chan; "is this Chicago?"

"It's my father in Chicago!" said Fan; "I've often thought how funny it was, out here! One breaks away, revels in freedom —

*un*denominational, anything to escape the chains of creed! — and then, you don't like the anarchy of it, the bad taste and lack of form, and the awful people you get lined up with! Sincere, and raw!"

"I went to that church," confessed Fanny, after a pause; "once — twice — and then I went back to my own, gratefully!"

And then, abruptly, Chan spoke: "What, exactly, is your idea of marriage, Fan?"

"I think," said Fanny, letting go of his hand and standing still, with uplifted face, "I think we are practically married already; when we enhance each other's values, so that apart we seem only half ourselves — you've felt that! When we rest on each other's good faith, so that we are bold to bare our spirits to each other! Oh, Chan, I am bold to show you my dream of my own life. I think of a woman's marriage as a temple not made with hands, but with the hourly efforts and visions and triumphs and desperations and ecstasies; all the times that come to a woman, all shaped by love toward her husband, cemented in by that love, on a firm foundation of love, and building slowly up to the very heights of love — "

"And where do I come in?" asked Chan, whimsically. "I am the staging for your architecture?"

"You are the idol inside!" retorted Fanny; and then, with indignation: "Sometimes you're funny in the wrong place, Chandler!"

Chan yielded nothing to her mood. "You see it's true," he said; "you're not allowing for me, at all; me, as I am. You've not the first idea what, in marrying me, you would be letting yourself in for. You've an enormous courage, and might weather it! You've plenty of ideas, but they're mere shells, with no content of experience. You are a child." They had reached the rectory corner, and between parted curtains could see Fanny's parents before the open fire, the reading lamp between them. "Looks peaceful," said Chan; "the other end of it!"

"Ours would be different!" cried Fanny, rebelliously. "We're of another generation, almost another breed. They are saints on earth. But you've only to hear my father read the words in the Service: 'shall never thirst.' It's the very centre and spring of him, his daily triumph in a thirsty world. But, Chan, do you remember what we read

the other night, that Nietzsche called the dominant note of Brahms: *Sehnsucht?* That's me. I am thirsty. And I want to drink the water of life, but not dear Father's idea of 'life' — something very far removed from Chicago! — no, life, as it turns up every morning, anywhere you like, but always on earth! — your thirst for it never quenched, for that would be death!"

"I can see perfectly" — Chan's voice held an odd note of bitterness — "that you could easily be independent, economically, of a mere man, Professor Ticknor! I see you an Oracle to a classroom of young ladies, each in a big wooden armchair, with its right arm widened out to hold a notebook for your priceless words. Priceless, but netting you an income which we'd be lucky to get out of my pictures! Oh, my dear child, why didn't you let me do it — make up my mind whether I could risk it, and try to win you? With the black horror of losing you, and the high hope of succeeding, and all the rest of what you've robbed me of! It's the male animal that wants to capture. You want real life. That's the realest thing there is."

Fanny waited, for her, a long time; then

spoke, humbly: "Perhaps I didn't know much about men. I just thought of persons. But I'd rather make mistakes than just wait, not look up till my elbow's nudged. If I say, 'I must live,' don't tell me, like your Whistler, 'I don't see the need of that.' It is my need. It's more important to me, even, than marrying you, if it comes to that! If I'm not to be allowed my mistakes — "

"Ah, now that's where I come in! You go blundering up your mountain, with your eyes fixed on the sun till you're blind; you're more like your good father than you suspect! And I stand at the foot, to catch you when you fall. So you don't cheat me of my nice little masculine prerogatives after all!" He turned upon her, whirled her around, for she had her back to him, and without warning enfolded her in an embrace that literally took away her breath. "You said we were married already. Don't you feel more so, now?"

"It's like Carlyle's 'Baptism of Fire," Fanny gasped; and Chan, chilled by the "literary" touch, forgave it for the sake of the transfigured face that she lifted to his kiss.

II
PLANS

CHAPTER II

PLANS

DON'T let's go in yet!" she suddenly decided, with her foot on the doorstep. "It's such a new night, isn't it! like a jump off somewhere. We don't want to connect back right away!"

"Your idea is to be free, Fan! And it's a great idea. But, as an artist, I feel the fetters of — we'll call it technique! You can't just break loose — "

"Not to destroy but to fulfil," quoted Fanny; "but, just the same, Chan, the New Testament *is* new. Fulfilling isn't repeating. I don't want our marriage to be like my parents'. I want it to be different. Better, Chan! And going on, on — that's what I feel most about it. Not satisfied with 'human limitations' that dear Father 'overlooks' all kinds of maladjustments with — a nice pair of smoked glasses, through which he looks kindly down on little Mother.

She's more like me, Chan; you might call it hotheaded."

"I don't know much about my father and mother's marriage," said Chan. "They died, as I told you, when I was a little kid, too small to be a critic! I've been principally under the care of my uncle, or, really, of his French wife, Tante Héloise. You'll know her, and love her."

"You don't like my 'criticizing' my father and mother?" Fanny urged, restlessly. They were facing the wind again, and Chan had to run for his hat.

He came back slowly. "There's an ingratitude in it, bad taste. That's what I don't like in it. Yet of course you don't mean it for that. Only I think it's dangerous freedom to allow one's self. We're an immensely wise pair of lovers, are we not, you darling!"

"I don't believe there were ever any happier!"

"I don't believe there ever were!" said Chan, gazing very tenderly into the bright face, so eagerly and confidently lifted to his. It was almost too selfless. Should one ever give so absolutely? Was it right to accept

such giving? "She doesn't count the cost," he said to himself. "Well, generosity is its own reward. And I vow, as far as in me lies, I won't fail her."

"It seems a little as if we were living in the last chapter of one of those novels we've been reading together, Fan, doesn't it!"

"Yes! But, really, Chan," Fanny insisted, "it's the first chapter. Back there was just the foreword. This is the story."

"All right!" Chan laughed. "How shall we go about Chapter Two? The little house, down in Brimmer Street, has been closed since I've been away. My uncle, since being retired as President Emeritus, has gone about a good deal, lecture trips and that sort of thing, and Tante Héloise took a little apartment near by. I think she rather expected to come back and keep house, with me there, next winter. The house is mine. About all I have, Fan! It's no place for painting, but my old friend, Tom Brinkerhoff, had asked me to work in his studio. It's a ripping good studio. You'll like Tom. He's an old bach, of course — has his limitations! We'd planned to grow old and crusty together."

Fanny seemed, for the moment, lost in thought. Then she spoke, more slowly than usual: "There'll be a lot of things to settle. It's not just we two, as I've thought of it. Will your Tante Héloise and your Tom Brinkerhoff, Bachelor, like it?"

"They'll like *you* — or I'll know the reason why!" Everybody liked Fanny Ticknor. He had already noticed that. It had bored him not a little, having so many people "butting in." He had not challenged, even himself, this possessive attitude. Why, it was really he that had asked her in marriage. Yet he wouldn't belittle the courage of her act. Well, if she was to be his wife, Tom, old Tom, needn't think he could go halves in that as the two had done in every other possession. "Tom mustn't like you too much!" he said aloud, with an inward grin at the thought of Tom's envy. Fan was enough to make any man forget his vows of celibacy in the name of Art. Tom couldn't blame him.

Fanny guessed little of this mental harangue. "I shall make them both just glad you married me!" she said with fervor.

"In money matters," Chan began again,

trying to speak practically, while his mind was filled with the sweetness of the irradiated face in the moonlight —

"Ah, there I can always help too!" cried Fanny; "lectures and writing — "

"There have always been enough men in our family to look after the women." Chan's voice was irritated.

"But, in Boston?"

"Oh, there are always the highbrow ladies! But they are mostly spinsters."

"Here we are, quarrelling already! Isn't it perfectly de-licious!" murmured Fanny. "Of course, Chan, I won't insist on earning any money, if you'd rather not, dear old Grandpa!" She gave his fingers a little ecstatic squeeze, and the man in him thrilled sharply to the woman in her.

III
TANTE HÉLOISE

CHAPTER III

TANTE HÉLOISE

THERE are many Chicagoans, whose religion it is to believe that in their vivid young city lies the hope of America. There are other Chicagoans that almost furtively turn to New England for what they feel that she alone, in this new country, has laid up, in the more conservative values. Fanny belonged to the latter class, and looked forward eagerly to going back, as she felt it to be, to the State of her parents' origin.

Chan, teasing her, spent hours in telling her that the city of his birth was provincial, parsimonious, puritanical; the wrong location, the wrong size, the wrong climate and atmosphere for an artist. But he never dreamed of "settling" anywhere else; and Fanny was only too willing to enter into a conspiracy to cover up the sentiment of the thing under an air of business caution. Portraits must begin at home. With his

Boston ancestry and his Boston Art Museum training, Chan was forced to see that Boston was his chance for "orders."

The first of these, and it was a fine one for a starter, came in almost immediately after he had taken Fanny back to his grandfather's house in Brimmer Street. His grandfather had built the house, before the Embankment had been thought of, and Chan's boyhood had known the unkempt riverbank as his back yard. But to Fanny the Embankment was a pleasant reminder of the Lake Shore Drive, with its walks and talks with Chan. "Grandpa wouldn't have enjoyed the Jews and their guttural German, almost under his windows!" he remarked to Fanny. "Oh!" she said, "but it's lovely for them to have such a place to wheel their baby-carriages! and without them, wouldn't it be almost too snug and tidy?" She was comparing the Charles River Basin with her beloved, wild, moody Lake Michigan.

"But snug little old Boston has given us a very neat little job!" he answered gaily. "A portrait of my dear Uncle, for the President's room. They usually have an established artist for that lot. But I guess the

dear old gentleman was so bowled over by you, Fan!"

"I've no doubt it was my charm, and not your genius, that got the order," said Fanny demurely; "but your genius will have to make the picture."

Fortunately for Chan's beginning reputation, his uncle was sufficiently the scholar in the shapeliness of his head, and a mixture of the distant and the affable in his set-up and bearing, to satisfy the judges' notion of a portrait for academic walls. On the part of the slightly larger public that later viewed the work, there were, to be sure, some adverse comments. The eyes were not precisely of the shade of gray that one old lady, who had in her youth made watercolor sketches, remembered them; to say that the light of an evening lecture platform might give them a different color from that of the studio in the morning would have seemed a heresy to her. "And the mouth?" questioned her young companion at the exhibition; "I think his mouth is much handsomer than that!" This insistence on the "handsomeness" of his uncle's face had been from the first an annoyance to Chan.

It was what, most of all, he had tried to get away from: the chiselling, especially in profile, of a sharpness too metallic, difficult to convey in terms of the painter's edge, too suggestive of a jack-knife!

Chan made, both he and Fanny felt, a much better thing of the "foreign-looking" wife. Héloise Lewandowska, she had been; daughter of a noble family of Polish refugees that had lived for a couple of generations in France. Her face had the vivid look that betrays temperament; and her fine hands, as you compared the two portraits, made her husband's look weak and insignificant. Her hair was velvety black, and always beautifully arranged; under heavy black brows, her eyes were of an extraordinary blue, like an Irish girl's! The modelling of her face suggested some race intermixture, irregular almost to uncouthness when in repose, but lighted up, in almost every waking moment, with a mobility that softened what would otherwise have been harsh. The "character" in the lines that were yet so fresh and alive and alight seemed to suggest the miracle of the Age that "knows," still keeping the Youth that "can."

Fanny, without waiting for the older woman's approbation, fell head over heels in love with Tante Héloise. And, while she gave Tante luncheon after a "sitting," or read aloud for an hour in the Studio while Chan worked alone — Tom had not yet come home from Paris — she studied this woman, married now for many years, as she would have studied a textbook.

To study was, with Fanny, to covet for herself a certain tact in Tante, somehow combined with a sureness, almost a masterfulness of speech and manner, different from anything Fanny had ever known. How was it done? Was it the difference between Paris and Chicago? Or was it purely the personal equation? Fanny, experimenting every day with her own relation to Chan, increasingly perceived that she either "gave in" or refused to give in, when there arose some small difference. She could not contrive these rapid adjustments that disposed of the difference without any fuss, "solved" them and left no sediment!

It must be what Chan was forever calling the technique of the Art of Marriage. Admirable it certainly was, delicious, to see

Tante with her handsome, autocratic, elderly college president. If she turned him around her strong little-finger, it was, as when she so caressingly played her violin, to make music, to tune him to a harmony that, without her, he could never have laid hold of. It was the peculiar power that she, of all mortals, possessed with this rather pampered gentleman. He was sick of being bowed down to; she stood erect. Yet, if she opposed his will, and that not infrequently, he never knew it; he simply felt that, having been a little in doubt, he had now quite made up his mind. It was a comfortable, settled feeling.

In another, more personal matter, Fan was grateful for Tante's tact. Chan, relying on Fanny's university training in languages, suggested that in the studio they three use French. Fanny's book knowledge was anything but workable. But Tante so delicately helped her out of the sloughs into which she fell, that no abrupt perception of her first failures reached Chan. And, while she hesitated over the — was it deceit? — involved, she improved so rapidly that already, like so many problems under Tante's touch, the thing was solved.

"Tante is a little discouraging, though!" she confessed her feeling to Chan, the last day of work on the portrait; "in speech, as much as in singing, her voice is so full of color and music, she makes me feel terribly commonplace — to say nothing of her doing it easily in five languages. And she moves you so; literally, never leaves you where she found you. She excites you — to be a lot more of a person, too. Oh, Chan, I see it clearly now; that's the sort of wife you ought to have had."

"Well, then, be that sort," said Chan quietly.

Deeply chagrined by this unlooked-for answer, Fanny withdrew into herself, and brooded long, as she lay that night, sleepless. That wasn't her sort; and she had been sincere and generous in admiring it, and in seeing how Chan craved the interest and variety of that type. Perhaps this was the beginning of a long fight within her own fastnesses! Had she been a little cocksure of making Chan a good wife? Must she change herself? Give up her tight little measures, pretty nearly filled, and the self-satisfaction of them, and, indefinitely, ex-

pand! Go further than she had ever looked? Was that, perhaps, what it meant, to be an artist's wife?

Well, Chan was conceited, to talk as if it was for her to do the changing! Yet, no — he was the least satisfied with himself of all the people she knew. No, it was that, openly, he would take the rôle of preceptor to her, while he did his self-criticizing in private. This wasn't fair, but it saved his thorny pride. She loved him for his pride, and would have died before she would have wounded it. Really, it didn't matter so much about her pride, if she could only learn!

Round and round in her brain went these confused ideas. In a sudden panic of self-doubt, she reached out her hand toward Chan in the dark. "Dearie!" she just breathed; but he woke, alert in an instant. "What is it?" he asked, startled. "Do you really wish you had married an entirely different type of woman?" The words burst out against her will. "Please, please don't laugh, Chan!"

But Chan was past any control of the laughter that overcame him. "Did you wake

me up, to ask me that?" he sputtered weakly, as he shook the bed with his contagious merriment. It wouldn't have been Fanny, if she hadn't laughed, too. He pulled himself together, and patted Fan's outstretched hand. "You're the right sort of woman for me!" he said; "and don't you forget it!" Then, with a squeeze of her fingers, he went on: "But, Fan, you don't feel that we're either of us finished and done for, do you? It seems to me as if we'd just begun. Life changes us as we go along; and it's my religion to hope that the change is for the better. For a starter, you'll do very well indeed, Fan!" He kissed her fingers, and her face, and her hair; then, like a boy, he fell back and was asleep in a minute.

But, the next day, he began to watch the growing intimacy between Fanny and Tante, with a new curiosity, and a little doubt. Tante he knew to be, under her polish of manner, of that sound fibre that alone takes the highest finish. It amused him to see Fan's guilelessness meeting this sophistication; questioning, fascinated, modified.

Was there, for a mind like Fanny's, habituated to so different a mental method, a lurk-

ing peril in the spell cast by Tante's art? the danger, in some little everyday question, of a yielding not later justifiable at the bar of Fanny's "reason"? Chan saw that Fan was all conscience, and that it was this that stamped her with the curiously childlike quality that he loved, almost worshipped, in her. So long as she could satisfy her own exacting, though so simple, standards of conduct, she was buoyantly happy and herself. To fall short of this, he felt, would be to her nature a poignant and unrelieved misery. If she should be beguiled into following Tante on a path of which her calmer reason would not approve, what then? What would become of her adoration of her idol? What — and this would be the test of everything — of her own delicious directness?

Tante laughed comfortingly, when he confided to her this haunting query of his mind. "And if you are the little one's godfather, so am I also a little her godmother! Is it not true?" she smoothed his tousled hair, as he sat at her feet, on a little old cricket, saved from the ruins of an ancient English church. "She is such a dear child, she makes god-parents of us all. But, dear

boy, you must not, for all that, relegate Fanny to the nursery. She has plenty of strength in her nature to match either of us."

"Oh, I don't condescend to Fan! She's the stronger of the two. But she has no caution. She experiments. And she's had very little guidance at home. Her father and mother have a faith in her that comes to a superstition. You should hear the little mother say to her friends: 'Fanny and Channy are to set up housekeeping at once. Yes, Fanny is inexperienced, but Fanny can do anything!'"

"And so she can," said Tante; "and I will perhaps show her — a little — how."

IV
THE HOUSE WARMING

CHAPTER IV

THE HOUSE WARMING

LEFT alone in her apartment, sometimes for a week or two at a time, Tante Héloise was naturally *habituée* at the little Brimmer Street home. One morning, Fanny for the first time ventured to put before her friend one of the problems arising from Chan's extreme repugnance to the littering up of the house with any trash that happened along: "That, dear Tante, is his way of referring to our wedding gifts. Of course, one knows that a miscellaneous lot of house-furnishings, chosen by a miscellaneous lot of people, will not have any marked continuity; or any separate but pervasive charm, that might, as Chan calls it, tie them together." Tante laughed softly, and Fanny, laughing with her, went on: "Ah! I am remembering the atrocities. But, the givers? You can no more choose, stamp with your own preferences, and thus tie

together your circle of friends, than you can their presents. Of course, the very least amenable of them are your relatives. I say, you've got to put up with them. Chan says he won't, and that's flat."

"There are degrees, are there not?" mused Tante; "degrees of relationship, and no less, of sufferance. I find, *chérie*, that a great deal can be done by refusing to settle things *en bloc*, *n'est-ce pas?* There are nuances, and, what a man will not endure, but a woman will contrive for him, compromises?"

Fanny disliked the word. She disliked, too, the continual distinction of sex that Tante made so much of. And it was the first time she had opened to any third person her reluctance to accept as final her husband's sharp decisions in the matters of taste usually left, not because of her sex, but because of her specialized activities, to the wife. Her clear eyes clouded, but she continued, with her face averted, a little shy, childlike habit of hers: "You know those awful things in the attic! in the cellar! in our next-door neighbor's garage!"

Tante's warm blue eyes were full of com-

prehension. At the same time, her mind noted with pleasure the dancing lights in the fly-away curls over Fan's ear. As she turned her face again, Tante caught the chestnut tint in the eyes that matched something in the hair; and the sweet red lips, partly open over the exquisitely regular white teeth; all full of appeal to the mother in Tante Héloise, always longing for a daughter.

"Of course, the way we did things at home," Fanny hurried on, reassured in her confidence by Tante's motherliness, "there just wouldn't be any fuss at all. It would be perfectly understood. I should simply leave everything around for the first season, whether charming or hideous, till everybody was through looking. Then we could change them. But you know Chan. He's so deadly serious about it. It's his artistic conscience. It's as binding on his nature as my father's ethical conscience, or ecclesiastical, is on his. Nobody would think it fair to interfere with that!"

Nobody knew so well as Tante that Fan would listen to no criticism of Chan. So she put aside her own "ethics," her inter-

pretation of life as Proportion and Adjustment, in the name of Logic, of Art, and lent herself for the moment to Chan's emphasis on the particular art of personal environment as expressed in the arrangements of the house. "And he is perfectly right, is he not, *petite?*" she murmured over Fanny's tumbled hair, with its slipping shell pins among the piled cushions on the big settle.

"Granted his premises, he is right," said Fanny; "that is what a funny old Prof, at the University, used to say, whenever he got stuck, in his comparisons among the great thinkers of the past. Comparative Religions was his chair. How very far away, far back, all that seems to me now, dear Tante! As if I had always been married to Chan Morton. How strange a commentary on those ancient notions about time and space! I just thought of them then as something to be 'recited.' Now I see why Plato and the rest of them insisted so, on which part of life is real and which is shadow, and time as a category of the mind, and all the rest of it!"

"My dear Doctor dwells much in the realms of Historic thought," said Tante; "but,

at least, we know that all these phases of existence must, of necessity, seem the most important, each to its gifted students. To an artist, I think, particularly, his art must needs color his whole horizon. Do you remember Rodin? Art is the reflection of the artist's heart upon all the objects he creates. It is the smile of the human soul upon the house and upon its furnishing, the charm of thought and sentiment embodied in all that is of use to man. It is better in the French!"

A delicate fragrance of the leaves of a rose-geranium stole over Fan's senses. She was prejudiced against perfumes. Yet in Tante, she loved this sort of thing. Was it an instance of what Tante meant, by "allowing for the ensemble" in one's judgments?

"You see," Tante went on more lightly, "it is to our Rodin, as to your Chandler, what man is put into his earthly environment for, instead of living in the clouds like the angels. There is no escape. He must transmute this physical into something spiritual. It is the artist's conscience, as you say; and is it not in your own New Testament that the way of the conscience is strait

and narrow? You would not leave all this to his — relations, do you call it?"

"But, after all, what's a clock more or less?" cried Fan, in rebellion. "What you say is so fanciful. One might as well not be a grown man if he can't just look the other way!"

Fanny leaned and took from its hiding-place among the pillows a small, square leather case. "There's that!" she cried; the quick, impulsive tears springing to her eyes, with a light in them that matched the leaping flames in the hickory fire. "Oh!"

"What is it, little one?"

Fanny's voice sounded dry and colorless. "It's a little clock, in stamped leather," she said slowly; "Chan remarked that it ought to have been stamped out." Removing the clock, she handed the case to Tante for inspection. "Chan's cousin — second cousin," she added more quietly.

"Bad!" said Tante; "really — you agree that it's not good?"

There fell a little silence between them that was like speech; and it was in answer to its implications that Fan at last said, "Well, to be practical, there's our house-warming party!"

"I see it all," was Tante's comforting answer to this.

"You don't see them all! Even wonderful you — the 'things,' dug up and distributed around here!" She waved her hand toward the nice bareness around the big settle. "What — you recognize Chan's voice, but to this he has converted me — what would the good old lines and interesting carving in this oak amount to, crowded in among alien pieces, so that you see nothing, only sit down on something?"

"Ah! — but there enters my idea!" said Tante; "one of my compromises, if you like!" She spread her shapely hands deprecatingly. "But it will work. Is it not, according to your own Mr. James, a justification? The biggest of the things, as I recall: the drawing-room suite from your dear parents, and the two immense Morris chairs — " Her gesture so brought up their proportions that Fanny giggled hysterically. "It is only, *petite*, for the moment."

"Oh!" gasped Fanny, trustful, but not enlightened.

"Your father and your mother will be here just for that one day, you tell me?"

"Yes. It is all they can spare from the Convention."

"And you were lamenting this morning that Chandler was absolutely obliged to go to New York, to capture that portrait order, and that you would have to go on with the reception without him — which, in America, can always be explained by the 'business.'"

"Yes; and we shall be, anyway, quite an imposing line, to receive; and my beloved Father will save the situation from being entirely feminine."

"Ah!" was Tante's gratified sigh; "I see the three Fates working for our plan. It is the Ticknors' day. For the moment only, *chérie*, we forget Chandler's fastidiousness. Oh, what a mouthful of a word! We place about the house the gifts of the wedding, for the observation of the happy donors, is it not?" Tante smiled radiantly. Fanny felt suddenly on guard; the dread of the simple mind for the dangers of what is complicated.

Tante read her face but was not hurt, only a little amused, and touched, too, remembering Chan's plea for Fanny's childlike directness of action. "Trust me," she said, feeling

loath to disturb what was so fresh and winning, yet convinced that such sincerity was not for the world of men, whatever it might be for women.

"It is for the moment only," she repeated, "and for a help to Chandler's career. How many times have I thus been the servant of my husband's professional advancement! To make enemies at the outset, what a mistake for a profession depending upon one's friends! Now, *par exemple*, there is Chan's Great-Aunt Maria, and her portrait of her Channie at the age of six. Would you rob her, at the age of ninety, of her illusion that Chan's own talent has descended from herself?" Tante's laugh rang out low and musical, chording with Fanny's higher, gayer pitch. "Let that picture, in all its horror, appear, just for the moment, on the panel above the fireplace there. Rocky-Acres is twenty miles away, and Aunt Maria is a very old lady. It can afterward repose with all the security in the world, in the attic. And you have with you, and not against you, an influential North Shore contingent."

Fanny said nothing, and Tante, with a little gesture as of one division of the enemy

disposed of, went on: "Then, for we must be very consistent in our manœuvres, what did Jane Frothingham, the niece with whom Aunt Maria lives, give you?"

"Nothing less," Fanny giggled convulsively, "than a pair of Chinese gods. They're in Mr. Kittelle's garage, looking down perfectly unmoved on that gorgeous limousine. But," she added breathlessly, "there's the haughty chauffeur. I simply couldn't!"

"We must have the gods," was Tante's sole answer. "What else, then, have we?"

"Oh, of course, the Liberty curtains. From Cousin Josiah and Cousin Urania Windsor. They're stunning. The colour of them — you have to spell with it with a *u*, as Charles Lamb liked to spell plum pudding with a *b*, it seemed so much richer! All the glowing red of jewels, of fruit-juices, of jack roses, in old brocade with the surface of a baby's cheek —"

"And where are they?"

"They're up in the attic, at the other end from the drawing-room set; over under the north skylight, where the old sea-chest stands. Chan is painting me up there, at the open chest, handling the silken stuffs out of it.

He likes the glint in my hair and eyes with the red in the brocade. Something like that." Fanny blushed a little. "I always get him wrong; 'red eyes' isn't just what he means."

"If the color of the curtains reveals the jewel-tints in Madame's eyes, it is a reason the more for having them down for the tea" was Tante's pronouncement.

All the next day, the two conspirators collaborated: Fanny, ill at ease, and alternately exultant and depressed; Tante, for the first time in Chan's house, thoroughly in her element.

Up in the chamber, "where your guests will consult the mirror," Tante coaxed Fanny into letting her arrange elaborate lingerie effects of ribbon and lace, to take the place of the simple, straight little curtains of English chintz, with bunches of the English wild-flowers on a black background, matching the valance and hangings of the old four-poster bed. On the small white mantel over the fireplace, she flanked the two dignified silver candlesticks with vases of cloisonné; and above, she hung a favorite Raphael Madonna. Much pleased with the

result, she took pains to soothe Fanny's transparent distress by frequent assurances: "Of course, this is not in our Chan's unerring taste, but it will please his Cousin Urania"; or, "We will have all prepared, and then, the moment the dear boy is gone, we shall arrange the house; and he will reap all of the benefit, while the torture, that we take upon ourselves!"

To poor Fanny, only half convinced, it seemed, through the days of interval, as if Tante's "arrangements" grinned at her through their thickest coverings; opened their corded boxes and danced on top. At night, she could not sleep for the package of curtains under the bed; they seemed to be frolicking around the bed-posts, with flying ribbons about their waists, so many headless little girls at dancing-school. And when, a dozen times, in her dreams, she kissed Chan goodbye as he started off for New York, Duplicity, a grinning satyr in cloisonné, sidled in between them and appropriated her kiss.

V

THE COMPROMISE

CHAPTER V

THE COMPROMISE

THE Day, so unimaginably slow in coming, suddenly leaped upon them, as long-waited-for times will do. Fanny, afraid of Chan, afraid of Tante, never for an instant her fearless self, had a last scare, when, at the moment of starting for his train, Chan came out with one of his characteristic hesitations. "I won't do it," he said; "I'll make New York wait." Fanny, glancing over at Tante, seemed electrically supplied with just the right protest: "But, darling, you do so hate functions of this sort; and Father's so used to them, as a clergyman, he goes through with them automatically; all the ladies in the parish shaking hands with him at once; and he can remember all their names when they come around to say goodbye; you couldn't do that. And Mother adores it all!"

Chan went. And when midnight came

upon Fanny's wakefulness, and he had not come back, or telephoned that he had missed the train, or in any other of a thousand imagined ways fulfilled Fanny's fears that he might yet not be safely "off," the poor girl's mind stopped galloping among untoward possibilities, and she fell asleep.

When, at noon of the Day, she was summoned by Tante to view the final effects upstairs, and — with her father and mother, immensely pleased with everything! — walked confusedly about in her own house, she felt her heart sink to her boots. She had not recognized, in herself, the slow disintegration of her old complacencies which had insensibly come about as she watched Chan at his work. At home she had accepted her surroundings from other people; had, in any case, considered such selection as of trivial importance. That Mind could ignore Matter had been, subconsciously, her creed for the higher education. That mind had the duty toward matter of shaping it was Chandler's idea of religion; that the divine in man should, from generation to generation, create form out of chaos, beauty out of the material nearest at hand — a progressive

Genesis! Well, here, in the haphazard arrangement, amounting to chaos, in each room and "vista," she saw what she had of old been blind to, the negation of all this. She could smell it, so palpable and pressing had this new sense grown!

And this was what, in Chan, his wife had in a fit of cowardice trampled under careless feet.

Yet, no! It was, as Tante felt, a world of compromise. There was the other thing to look out for, Chan's "career"! What a child she had been! as Chan had put it one day, in a slow, humorous tone, "Dreaming dreaming, dreaming"! Other people might sell their souls, but she, never! What a world!

She looked, for the first time a little sympathetically, at her parents, so placidly walking about in this muddle of a house, this muddle of a world. "I'll never be so satisfied with it as that!" — she kept her mind free to feel. "Awfully well done! Surprisingly successful, dear!" she found herself saying to Tante's irresistible appeal for her approbation.

The guests bore reflected upon their friendly

faces the same smug satisfaction that had so settled down upon Father and Mother when witnessing the "parlor set." It was all, to the heretofore unobservant Fanny, a new light on human nature. All was exactly as Tante had said. Fanny herself was not built like that. She was not sensitive as to what place was accorded her gifts. Perhaps it was as Chan had once said, and she had then denied, because she didn't care much anyway, even in the giving. Yet it irritated her, quite unreasonably, of course, to hear Great-Aunt Maria saying to whoever would listen: "Yes, the dear little fellow was just six years old. And his grandma had just given him that little lamb he's holding. And she died immediately afterward, so we think a great deal of the picture. And he said, 'Gammie's lammie!' We all thought it so touching. I'm pleased you think the portrait so well done. You know he's a portrait-painter himself. Some think it an interrupted inheritance — I believe they call it now? — latent from my generation to his, dear boy!"

Too tired to sleep, Fanny passed another of her self-questioning nights. "It wasn't

so much timidity, after all," she assured herself; "it really took courage, and will take more. It must be Life's way of turning a girl into a woman. Has Mother been through it and come out on the other side? I noticed a queer little more intimate way with me than she had at home!"

Chan had hoped to get back early in the morning. Every trace of the reception had been erased. Yet Fanny felt sure he would know. The very success of the scheme that had cost her so much depended on her not "telling." But he would know. He read her. And she longed, with every fibre of her being she longed to have him know!

"Oh, my husband!" she cried aloud; "dear old Father was right. 'Put not your trust in princes!' The very kindest of Tantes won't do. You've got to get back to God!" The still, small answer that waits for such moments comes in the phrases of one's individual reading and experience. Fanny laughed at herself, when the incongruous bits from diverse languages and times sprung to her help: "*Perge modo!*" — "*Continuez, mes enfants!*" — "Sail on, *sail on*, he said!"

All of them, after all; Aeneas and Colum-

bus, and the painter-men in Whistler's studio, needed the courage to push ahead in the dark. Her own predicament, trifling as it might seem, was the same. And the warm sense of human companionship, the universal, ineradicable hope that lay in going on, comforted Fanny. Things hadn't stopped. With a new eagerness for whatever the morning might bring, she quickly fell asleep, and did not wake, till Chandler, hurrying up from the morning train, kissed her flushed cheek with its straying curl of amber hair, like a child's.

VI

CONFESSION

CHAPTER VI

CONFESSION

"DARLING little Wifikins!" he breathed to her waking sense. "My, but I'm glad to get back to you!"

She threw her arms around his neck, strangling speech. Laughing, he broke away and straightened up his tall figure. "Well, I corralled that job," he said; "you needn't go after any teaching yet. A cool thousand apiece. There's the difference between Boston and New York, if you like."

So loving, he looked down at her; so glad and kind; she couldn't tell him then. She had decided to burst out with it; that, for a brief relief, had seemed the meaning of her *Perge modo:* her new day. But now, as we are told when we are children, she must wait and see.

"You didn't stop at the station for your coffee?" She sprang to the bell; "I'll have Mary bring some up. I'd no idea it was so

late. Dear neglected old Channie! It's great news! Was it the photographs of the portraits of Tante and her Doctor that did it? They really ought, between them, to do anything; one is all that the other isn't; one, handsome, final; the other, full of intangible values, suggested things: in *esse*, in *posse!* Which did they prefer?"

As she turned back from groping in the closet for the kimono he liked, the dull red one, she was just in time to see his quick eye light on something she had overlooked; a little "beaten" metal bookrack on her desk. "Where's that Oxford book-rest I got for you?" he asked, with a new rasp in his voice — he had had no coffee! "I thought we agreed to suppress that rotten piece of brass."

"You know it's Beatrice Perkins' own work," Fanny answered, feeling a little faint, but also a little rebellious. "She was — was here, yesterday — "

" — and saw that — here? Oh, Fanny dear! If Trix wants to learn to do it right! But don't let's show her experiments among our intimate belongings. They don't belong. When that girl has earned a place for her stuff, on that beautiful old desk made

by a man who had left his apprenticeship behind him, her gift will be a gift, and not a rotten sentimentality and self-deception." At such encounters, Fanny had noticed the uncontrollable *accelerando* of Chan's *appassionato;* as if the feeling got away with him. Before he had finished his attack on it, he had flicked "that thing" into the waste-basket.

If Fanny had not yet learned what would satisfy Chan's eyes, she knew something of the imperativeness of his stomach. "I'll just run down and hurry up that coffee," she said. She wanted time to think. And she could not, in Chan's presence, think thoughts from which he was shut out. In the recognition of this fact that came to her on the stairs, was a solid comfort. "I'm not, at least, grown shameless!"

Her inward disharmony, however, made her snap at the cook: "Where in the world is Mr. Morton's coffee?" Chan's half-stifled words, as she left the room, seemed now to reach her: "Have you no conviction of your own?"

Now that she was away from the dear, coaxing Tante, Fan knew that Chan would

cheerfully throw Great-Aunt Maria's money after the bookrack, before he would yield an iota of ground on a matter of taste.

To Chan's eye, his wife, sitting on the other side of the little gate-legged table, with a coffee-cup of dim old blue in her hand, looked exquisitely lovely. His pleasure lit up his rather grave face; and, never far behind the pleasure, came the humor, of Fanny, girl just turned wife, in her "grand" manner presiding at the urn. His deep-set eyes were laughing and tender. It was the one look of him that Fanny could not resist. He was her husband, and with him she, just what she was, good or bad, was safe.

She rose, put down her untasted coffee, and stood at a little distance. Her figure even looked a little taller than usual, with a new dignity, won from difficult determination. It made Chan think of the night in Chicago, and her girlish, yet not unwomanly, temerity. His look changed to alarm, as he felt the tenseness of her.

She did not spare him. "And Great-Aunt Maria nodded around here, like a dusty sunflower; in an awful mauve velvet, with two garnet bracelets on one arm and three

on the other — you know she sent me one — and she told everybody about that wretched little stuffed animal: gammie's lammie. And the Chinese gods — "

Chan's voice broke in, like a stroke of lightning out of gathering clouds: "And you, my wife, lowered my flag, which has never been lowered before?"

VII

CHAN'S IDEA

CHAPTER VII

CHAN'S IDEA

"AN artist he should marry never!" Chan heard Tante's controlled outcry, as, upon opening the door, she sprang to Fanny's bedside. He had turned toward the window, trying to smother his rage, and standing there with his hands clenched in his pockets and his teeth set, had not seen his wife fall back white and limp with the shock of his anger. "And he should certainly not have a child!" the accusing voice went on, while Tante reached for a bottle of smelling-salts in her reticule.

"I'm perfectly all right!" Fanny said weakly, coming out of her faint with an encouraging little smile for her husband. "Did you hear Channy scolding me, dear Tante? You see, it was so sudden for him, about our wedding-present party. But I had to tell him. And then I got a little dizzy."

The sweet, rather square face, on the pillow, looked as white as the linen itself; but the warm hazel eyes had got back their eager lights. Tante leaned down to caress the broad, low forehead, aureoled in the loose masses of red-gold hair.

Tante was newly touched by the child quality of Fanny's ardent looks. "And you, who take exquisite care of each chair and table, and do not know how to watch over a delicate porcelain like this! Naughty one!" Tante's ingenuity was put to it, to smile at Fanny and frown at Chan, simultaneously. "The gods can not arrange it otherwise, when the innocent must through love feel the blame one would impose upon the guilty," she thought to herself, as she gathered Fanny into her arms. The color flooded back into the white cheeks and lips, but the eyes were not on Tante, but on Chan. "You know, dear," she answered Tante's challenge, "I'm really not delicate! I'm not a *pièce de musée!* More like one of those nice little practical geranium pots, good flat bottom, won't tip over, warranted for indoors or out in all weathers!" "And," her mind took up Tante's challenge, "You

see the furniture doesn't do queer things when Chan's back is turned!"

"I will pour you a cup of coffee, *petite!*" said Tante, arranging the pillows for Fan, who insisted on sitting up. "The Doctor said, did he not, that you were to take your coffee before rising?"

"Thank you, dearest. Chan, run down and get Tante a cup. Mary can't go up and down those long flights too often! I had my coffee ready, but I forgot to drink it!"

Tante relighted the small flame under the urn, and when Chan came back with the cup, the talk turned on the New York trip.

When Tante had left them, Fanny and Chan went down to the bookroom, and Chan arranged Fan's cushions in the big oak settle, then built up a comfortable pile of wood in the fireplace, set a match to it, and walked up and down the room with his cigarette. "You see, dear Wifikins," he said, gently; "you seem to feel that this trouble has been made, because you did not sufficiently regard my will, my taste, in the matter of our personal setting, here in this little house. Now that is not at all what I am talking about."

"What, then?" asked Fanny, surprised.

"What I was so astounded to find, was that you yourself were not so — well, call it fastidious — as to make such a thing as you did utterly unthinkable!"

Fanny shivered, and Chan drew a covering over her feet, and kissed her. "I'm afraid I'm losing control of myself again," he said; "but I'm trying to push you, and myself too, over that sticking-place where we just want to 'please' each other. That's childish. We should be together in our wishes."

"But pleasing you seems to me more important than the furniture," said Fanny; "I think personal relations are always the important thing; the end! The rest is means. My mind orientates itself toward you. You can sniff that way, but you can't change it. You are my East, Chan."

"I thought you believed in mind to mind, regardless of sex! You, of all people, Fan!"

"So I thought, myself. But I find that what I am often reverses what I think, Chan!"

Chan paced up and down, not answering. All at once, Fanny cried out: "Ah, don't be discouraged, Chan. I have it now. It's

only temporary, my doing these things for your sake. It takes time to grow new sprouts. If you'll just allow me to please you as a motive for the interim, I shall probably, like all new converts, become more concerned than you are, about coining life into art. Dear Chan!"

"Dear child!"

"Anyway, I shall not keep things from you again," said Fanny, with her warm, confiding look.

"That wouldn't enter into it, my way," said Chan, stubbornly. "If each, in the absence of the other, does no dishonor to the common flag, then, there's no need of that idea of reporting — "

"Ah!" Fanny laughed happily: "the funny part of it is that, now, you're thinking of yourself. You always like to know what I am about, while you're a regular oyster about your own doings. Now you've really told me nothing at all about the people you met in New York, and the house you're to do the portraits for!"

"That reminds me," said Chan, "that I've got to go over to the studio and plan what I'll take with me. You keep it up,

Fan, placing the stones in your temple; and I'll try to make you a better staging than I did this morning. And that reminds me, again — I must stop in and make my peace with Tante!"

VIII
BERYL

CHAPTER VIII

BERYL

CHANDLER was off for New York; probably for an absence of several weeks. "Fanny should not be left alone, just with one Irish maid, at this time," Tante urged upon him; "you remember I accompany the Doctor on his western trip, so that I can not be here throughout your absence. I have thought it over. A Radcliffe girl is my solution. It is frequently done, I learn. A young undergraduate who wishes to be self-supporting undertakes, in return for a home, the duties of 'mother's helper.' Why do you smile, dear boy? Our Fanny, is she not already a mother? Young husbands forget that the unborn child is already a burden!"

"I am very grateful to you, dear, good Tante, for the idea," said Chan, laughing; "but isn't this too far from Cambridge?"

"Oh, but — this part of the town, and with

the new subway! And there are in these up-and-down houses so many steps to take," she went on with her idea; "Mary is down at the bottom of the well! — and — *par exemple!* — a nice girl, who will adore our Fanny — and help a little with the sewing!"

So it came about that, with one of Tante's swift manœuvres, Beryl Stainer was established for the rest of her senior year in the "communicating" bedroom back of Fanny's own.

"My friend, Tom Brinkerhoff, will run in often to look after things, you know," Chan planned; "he'll probably be knocked over by your beautiful Beryl, Tante Héloise." Teasing her, he said goodbye. "Your moves are apt to be gay ones for a Boston chessboard, you know! I'm sure the Kittelle chauffeur will never get over the Chinese gods that he had to bring up here for that wedding-present exhibition!"

Chan's amusement was so contagious, shoulders shaking, and his face alight with fun, that Tante laughed faintly, though she saw no cause for laughter. She still resented both Chan's first anger and his subsequent jokes, over the "party."

"And perhaps that would not be the worst thing in the world for your Tom!" she went on, judicially. "Beryl is *bien-élevée*, you can see that! and a beauty — you can both see *that*, you artists! And as for money, *he* has that; which in America is all that is required."

"I shall not, at least, be bored!" exclaimed Fanny, coming in with her gay little laugh, "with all that going on under my nose. But, really, Beryl looks to me as little likely as the Chinese gods to play up to our book. Did you ever see such an unmoved-looking young girl? Saxon hair and face, with the unapproachable reserve of an East Indian!"

The portrait-painter in Chan was always alive to significances in face and bearing. "She has the advantage of the observer who takes no part in the game; that's what I see in her face. She'll have you and your plots at her fingers' ends in ten minutes. But you'll never know it. No young woman is as innocent as that girl looks. Yet she's very sweet," he finished, as if reluctantly.

Beryl certainly did not look designing, as she sat at the dinner-table that night, opposite Tom Brinkerhoff. Tom, like Chan,

was inflammable over beauty; and, as Fanny wrote Chan that night, she could see him tumble.

Fanny was full of moods, in looks as in spirits; there were moments when she seemed to radiate an exquisite light, from her high-piled amber-colored hair, loosely held up with combs of carved tortoise-shell that had "come down" to her from a sea-faring ancestor, to her eyes that so shone with her ardent enthusiasms, and her gestures that had the abandon of a happy child's. But she was often pale, even languid; her head was not well set on her slight shoulders; and her movements were apt to be rather awkward, as she bent forward, listening to your most casual speech with her whole body.

Beryl's queenliness had no such quick changes or betraying awkwardnesses. She was an Easter lily, if you can forget its fragrance; all white and gold, but, at least as yet, yielding no perfume.

"There is a personality in people that you can smell, if you are near enough!" said Tom to Fanny; "not what a dog smells, either! — although, who knows? — something not of the body!"

"Did you smell it in Beryl?" said Fanny, with a giggle; "if you did, I think you liked her 'aura'!"

"That's what I'm coming to," said Tom, with his friendly grin; "that girl, with her meek, parted yellow hair, like a pre-Raphael — no wicked gleams in it, like yours, Mrs. Chan! — she hasn't any aura. She eludes. It's rather fascinating."

"Are you insulting me?" asked Fanny, with another chuckle.

"*Au contraire, chère Madame;* I'm *con*-sulting you," was Tom's serious reply. "You must know, young as you are, that you can't put an impressionable painter-lad like me next to a — a — an unfolded bud of a golden-hearted lily — Ah, I should have been a poet instead of a painter!"

"You have Tante Héloise to thank, not me, for your exposure," said Fanny; "she said it would be all right if you did — though I don't know why I'm telling you this."

"Well, I have," said Tom; "and did she prepare the goddess to accept the victim?"

Tom's boyish face, with big shell-framed glasses, looked so solemn, that Fanny laughed

again. "I can't help it!" she excused herself.

"I never saw two people go off so easily as you and Chan," said Tom, peevishly; "Chan's shoulders shake, and your nose wrinkles. What's so darned funny?"

Fanny only laughed the more. "Chan's idea was to keep you amused, so I suppose it's all right!" said Tom, getting up and moving slowly toward the door.

"Oh, don't go away!" Fanny was all self-reproach. It was one of her beautiful looks, when she forgot to be self-conscious or awkward, and Tom sat down again very willingly, watching her with a first notion of "what Chan had seen" in her.

"You see, after all, Tom, you've told me yourself, that it's happened to you before! You called yourself 'inflammable.' But don't you think, Tom, Beryl will need a great deal of kindling?"

Tom's sigh seemed a little like relief; as if for a danger the less.

"But," he breathed hard; "did you ever see such a nose? either in profile, or when she turns that perfect oval of her face around in full-front! There's something — I've got the word! — unsullied, in the lines. And

the brows! That slight lift, when she listens. And the look in her calm, brown eyes, a look so simple and so subtle. As if she wondered what you were so excited about. Not that she cares. Just a laboratory experiment that she watches and records for further study. Do you know what I mean? And that expression about the mouth, as if she had reached far heights, altitudes — you know what I mean?"

Tom often sat late at the Mortons', in the library, on the big settle before the fire. "Just stay here as long as you like," said Fanny; "I'm going to bed, and I'll step in and see that Beryl's altitudes are comfy. I already feel like a mother to her!"

"Good night, then," said Tom happily; "call me up in the morning if you want anything."

IX

THE WARM TEMPERAMENT AND THE COOL

CHAPTER IX

THE WARM TEMPERAMENT AND THE COOL

"ARE you all right, Beryl dear?" Fanny spoke through the connecting door between the two bedrooms; at the same time lighting the two candles on the mantel, and sitting down in the low chair by the window, from which she could look out on the bridge lights, sparklingly spanning the Charles River Basin.

Beryl stepped softly into the room, in a warm yellow kimono, and stood, in proud meekness, before Fanny. "Is there something I may do for you, Mrs. Morton," she said, "before I go to bed?"

"Do sit down here, Beryl," said Fanny; lonely without Chan, and hungering for the girl's friendship, "and won't you begin by calling me Fanny?"

"Certainly, Mrs. Morton," said Beryl, in her cool, sweet tones; "that is, I mean, Fanny."

"Mrs. Morton" laughed. "We Westerners, I imagine, always seem a little headlong to you of New England," she said; "but, if we're to live together, we must be friends! As that flour advertisement goes, Eventually — why not now?"

Beryl did not yield to Fanny's solvent of easy laughter. "I have not, it seems, within me that particular impulse," she said quietly. Her voice was humble, almost imploring in quality; yet she seemed to weigh each word, and to have said just what she had meant, no more, no less.

After a pause, while Fanny waited, Beryl went on, like a child bidden to speak: "Do you feel, Mrs. Morton — Fanny — that the individual has any validity in the presence of the absolute?"

"*What?*" cried Fanny.

"The philosophy that has, during my college years, most attracted me," pursued the girl, colorlessly but with a queer insistence, too, "is the thought of my spirit free to live in its dream; floating above, or rather, outside, of personal attachments. Such attachments, accordingly, I deny myself."

Fanny chuckled inwardly, "Poor outlook

for Tom!" Then she spoke, with a heat in her voice that contrasted with Beryl's coolness, was perhaps generated by it: "Is it not the riches of life to love and be loved, 'personally'? Like the man in the *Mikado*, I say, You're wrong if you think it ain't. In every relation, little flaws, but the big ideal, the bridging over of our isolations — "

"It is my wish to preserve my isolation inviolable."

"Oh, don't you care a bit about sharing things? I thought we here could share everything, and have a jolly good time of it, together. You are depriving me of a great pleasure, Beryl." Fanny leaned forward, imploring: "Why, it doesn't seem even Christian!"

"I am not a Christian," came from the quiet, erect figure on the bed. Fanny, while seized with a sudden antagonism, felt a strange envy of the coolness that clothed the girl as with a garment. How much easier things would be, if you were made of white blood instead of red.

"I daresay you think that's rather disgusting," Beryl went on, but with no contriteness.

"Ah, you've done me a service after all!" said Fanny; "you make me see what Christianity is all about: to love God — and *the Second is like unto it, thy neighbor as thyself.* You've no right to that sentiment, all about you, brought into the world by Christianity, if you won't chip in! I've felt, since my marriage, that I didn't know much about life, but you know less, Beryl, if you think you can be independent! Good night! I won't keep you up, trying to prove that. You'll find it out! Good night, dear!"

"Good night, Mrs. Morton — Fanny," said Beryl, withdrawing.

X

QUESTIONS

CHAPTER X

QUESTIONS

FANNY wrote another page of her long daily letter to Chan, before she went to bed: "I feel like Lake Michigan breaking its strength against that sea-wall; do you remember it? Beryl is the stone wall. I ought, really, to be grateful for her statuesque calm; I, your teapot, darling! But, if you had your choice between a teapot and an ice-pitcher? Well, I hear you say, that might depend upon the weather!

"Oh, Chan, in a fit of desperation, I told her about little Channie! I counted on that. A woman would be interested. Of course, I can't help feeling that ours is a little more interesting. But guess what she said: 'You were married the first of January, and you won't have the baby till fall.' I couldn't help crying out, 'Why, yes, we've got him now.'

Father's reading of the Collect sounds in

my ears all day long: *Who has taught us that all our doings without charity are nothing worth.* 'Lovingness,' he used to translate it for me, when I was a little girl. And I wanted this Son of ours to be made out of lovingness from the very beginning, and here's a near companion of my daily life that refuses love. 'Episcopal clergymen are, I believe, often of the Emotional Type,' she said to me. I suspect she is doing me for her thesis: the under-brained, over-emotional sub-woman that daily hinders the super-man from arriving!"

The next morning, Fanny added another sheet: "The funny thing about Beryl, psychologically, is that she is full of the imagination she so despises. She was brought up on a farm, yet she has no tenderness for little animals. She holds up that adorable kitten Tom gave me, all furry curves in silky gray like a nice old lady's hair, and never has any instinct to pet 'him'! Think of calling a kitten him! All she enjoys is turning the tiny face this way and that, to watch its wriggles! Yet she observes in the close way that one associates with fondness for animals. Just now, she remarked, apropos of nothing,

as she was leaving the house for Cambridge, 'Have you ever noticed, Mrs. Morton — Fanny — how hens go about? Not as if their legs were directed by their heads; but, contrariwise, as if their legs chose the direction, and their heads then glanced down sideways and said, *Ah, here?'* Do you suppose she's got the hens in her thesis, too?"

Chandler wrote back: "Cut it out, the Beryl psychology. She must be tormenting when she's not amusing. But I don't want your letters full of her. Remember what she's for, is to save your strength. She's only half-baked, I suspect, and that Psychology-lecture-room nonsense has gone to her head. Don't worry about Tom! He'll get by it."

"Get by it?" went through Fanny's brain repeatedly, as she put on her tawny furs for a walk in the clear, cold, sunny morning. Even out by the River Basin, deep blue, with shining flocks of gulls that flashed and dipped and seemed like an image of all beauty and hope, there lay in the depths of her consciousness something like a shadow. What did it mean that men were like that — that even her Chan thought it so easy to

"get by" a thing that, in its intensity, absorbed them to the shutting out of all familiar interests? Fanny beamed, with her electric sparkle vivifying her color and her smile, upon a number of people that she passed; and they said to each other, "Mrs. Morton always looks as if she'd just had good news!" But, under a habit of happiness, there crept in an odd little uneasiness. "Perhaps it is only that it's the first time Chan has criticized my letters," she said to herself; "or it's just *you*, tiny son within me, upsetting my nerves, as you help yourself to your mother, little greedy!"

XI

TOM

CHAPTER XI

TOM

THE weeks of Chan's absence seemed to Fanny sometimes like years, sometimes like moments, as is the way with time.

One Saturday afternoon, she stood at the top of the street steps, holding the door open for the approaching Beryl, who, characteristically, made no movement of hurrying. "Here's a pretty palette of colors!" was Fanny's nervous greeting; "Mary's had a telephone that her sister is sick, out in Roxbury somewhere. The dinner is half ready. Mary just laid down de shubbel and de hoe and took the nearest street-car. Tante Héloise is just back from her western trip, and of course she's coming; and Chan's to be here, for over Sunday, you know. Oh, dear, and I thought we would do what old Tom calls our darndest, and I asked him too!"

Beryl threw down her hat and coat on the nearest chair in the little reception-room, sweetly prepared to help.

"Oh, please!" pleaded Fanny; "you know how Chan hates to find things cluttered about. I noticed, Beryl dear, a horrid bent safety-pin right there on that little telephone shelf. You know how carefully Channy designed that curve, to look just right in that corner. See what a bully little line it makes, and just clears both doors. Now I appeal to you, as a college girl, that should know the value of thought: Why throw away an artist's thought, by leaving rusty safety-pins around, without thought!"

Beryl was taller than Fanny, and she looked down at her with her usual air of imperturbability. Then she spoke, softly, dreamily: "Fanny: I have been taught, in my efforts at landscape painting, that one should pick out from the general mass of objects those fit for one's composition; and to the rest, close one's eyes. Fanny: I did not see the safety-pin."

The solemnity of this oracle sent Fanny off into one of her nervous giggles. "It's no use," she said, "if you're going to be a

Christian Scientist! But let's go downstairs. I warn you, Chan and Tom will want to 'see' their dinner."

The two prowled down the dark stairway; Fanny impatiently striking half a dozen matches, before she got the gas burner at the foot successfully lighted. The gas-oven was already hot, with Mary's nice roast and Yorkshire pudding inside. "Let's do the potatoes *farci*," suggested Fanny, with a rising enthusiasm.

"What is that, Fanny?" asked Beryl, in her incurious voice.

"Why, stuffed, you know, with something out of the ice-chest; chopped fish, or ham, and peppers." Fanny searched the shelves; "and you put them back in their skins, the baked potatoes, and lay them on a bed of parsley. Don't you love to see things look pretty at a dinner?"

"It sounds — puerile," came in the unemphatic tone.

Fanny's reply was borne back from the opened door of the refrigerator: "Of course, if you just gobble, to fill up! I call that canine. A dog doesn't care for a paper frill around his chop bone, I'll admit."

"But — Fanny: can not one thus keep intact his spiritual dream, flying through the upper realms, while philosophically accepting the laws of his physical chemistry!"

"Don't try that on Tom!" Fanny sparred back; "he won't stand for it. Ah, there he is now!" Tom's car had stopped in front of the basement window. "Run up, Beryl, and tell him I want him down here. We'll get him to fix up my coffee machine. He's immensely interested in that sort of thing — call it, material objects!"

"Beryl's not the least bit in the world interested in him!" thought Fanny, as the girl, reluctantly, just to oblige, mounted the stairs with the message. "Dear me, why am I letting him see her floundering around the kitchen? Well, I'm no Tante, and I don't see how any woman has the courage to be a matchmaker!"

Beryl, reappearing with the beaming Tom in tow, put a stop to this self-reproach. "I needn't have worried," said Fanny, smiling all to herself as she bent down for a dropped match; "Tom's eyes, like Beryl's, are now open only for what he wants to see!"

No matter that Beryl spilled the cream,

fell over the kitten, and but for his deft assistance would have dropped the roast off the platter, Tom kept his impression that Beryl most cleverly got up the whole feast; and he "left it" to everybody at the table, if it wasn't the best "feed" ever! His eyes, through their shell rims, beamed around on Fanny, who was happy in Chan's being there; on Chan, who was eating voraciously, as he had had nothing on the train; and on Tante, who, puzzled but gratified, praised the salad and the coffee, both of them Tom's work.

"Now tell us all about New York!" said Fanny; having waited as long as she could for Chan to begin on a report of his progress. "You know," she turned to Tante, "Chan writes regular letters, always, but only two lines; the first, to ask how I am; and the second to say he loves me dearly. It's awfully jolly, but not news!"

"*Que voulez-vous?*" asked Tante, with her gesture of spreading the question before the whole table; "to have that every day! And my Doctor thinks he has done the miraculous, if he sends me one line in a week!"

Chan listened to Tante, *par manière*

d'acquit, as she would have called it; but his answer was for Fanny: "Would you have a Pepys Diary?—up at seven, breakfasted at eight on a very good bit of toast and marmalade; nine to one, painted; thereafter a walk and a picture show; dinner in a little Italian restaurant, a dish of spaghetti and a small bottle of Chianti; and so to bed!"

Tante put down her coffee cup, and Fanny rose, with her little happy laugh at Chan's nonsense. "Let's go up to the music-room," she said; "Tante has brought her cello!"

Playing Tante's accompaniments, Beryl wove new enchantments for Tom. He sat about the room, on every chair in succession, restless to catch from each angle the flower-like poise of the lovely gold-crowned head.

Chandler, tired out, was resting every fibre of his being, in home and Fanny. The work in New York, the charming people he had been thrown with, had been stimulating, full of suggestion, vivid with the freedom from the daily round, and provocative of adventure. But this coming back to Fanny, he knew for the first time, as a home-coming. It was like coming back, after a dream, to himself.

Fanny, revelling in the simple delight of his proximity, woke but slowly to the marvel of Beryl's music. Was it that girl, so cold and unresponsive, playing with a fire and temerity that gave even Tante all she could do to hold her own? If there was a fault in Beryl's accompanying, it was that she dashed a little too headlong into the intricacies of Saint-Saëns's Concerto; in which Tante held to a classic repose that was the very note of her musicianship, ease, urbanity. Beryl's music was personal, passionate, everything that she prided herself on having escaped.

"But I must bring my violin over also!" cried Tante; "your accompaniment should be very sympathetic, *n'est-ce pas*, with my good little old violin, for it is a namesake, a Jacobus Stainer, Beryl. Your Stainers are not from the Tyrol?"

"The name, as far back as we know about, is English," said Beryl simply; "the organist of St. Paul's in London was my father's brother. My father was also an organist and a composer, and they gave me lessons when I was a little child. My father came to America, but was not successful, and died

the year before I entered college. My uncle died before that."

Beryl had risen and was standing meekly before Tante, like a child summoned to recite a lesson. Tom approached her now, saying, "Dear Miss Stainer, you are awfully tired, aren't you? That divine playing — and after getting us that wonderful dinner!"

Beryl had promised a classmate to spend the night in Cambridge; and it was arranged that Tom with his car should take Tante and her cello to the apartment, which was very near, and then go on across the bridge with Beryl. "And you will all promise, will you not!" he begged, in the "Tom" way that always got him what he wanted; "all of us, and nobody else at all at all, will get together for a Sunday tea, in my studio, tomorrow afternoon; and we'll just make these two geniuses — was ever a family so fortunate before? — play all my music. I've quite a lot, you know. And the studio is not bad acoustically." He turned to Tante. "And may I call for you and the cello and violin? — and old Chan can do a little something too, on my violin — which is not a good one, but good enough for him!"

Fanny and Chan were glad to be alone together, when the motor had whizzed away. "Now do give me some more of the Diary," pleaded Fanny; "you didn't just go prowling around New York alone!"

"No," said Chan.

"I remember, in Chicago, I always thought of you, as having always one man-comrade, tried and true, and good for all-night arguments about Velasquez and Whistler and oils and tempera; and, then, a few girl and women-friends, who liked a man to be a charming talker, and, in Chicago particularly, not a man of affairs! — in the American, not the French use of that word!" Fanny completed this explanation with a quick blush and a laugh.

"Well, Fan, you're such a child, such a dear, ingenuous child! — *G-u-m-p*, some people would spell it — that these sirens simply don't count any more with me! But Tante doesn't believe in these separations! She wants me to take you back to New York; and she knows the world, Fan."

"I — wouldn't go!" Fanny's scorn of the idea was hot. "Why, Chan!"

"There are some pretty girls in New

York!" said Chan; "and the little circle I was thrown with, more or less daily, was awfully nice to me."

"Dear Chan, I can see them; flocking in, and disturbing your work, till you turned them all out and were very candid; and then, afterward, you were extra nice to them to make up; and they didn't know which of you they loved the most!"

Fanny turned down the gas lights, and took a little cricket, making Chan lie back, while she stroked the thick, fine hair off the forehead that felt hot to her cool hand. Chan, pretending to close his eyes, kept a slit open, through which he watched the look of Fanny in the dim light. There was an exaltation in her face; and a peculiar enfolding gesture in her pose, that made you think of a grey pigeon's brooding wings. It was all so Fanny. Nobody else would ever be that to him.

The strangeness of it, of marriage! Over there, in New York, there had been a girl; his critical mind had registered her superiority to Fanny, in this and the other respect. She was, like Fanny, a college girl, but more easily! — and of a distinction! And poise

she had, and grace, and a witholding of herself that egged a man on. Yes, there it was! Fanny's generosity, too facile, it didn't give you enough to do! Sabina's littlest smile had to be earned. Of all this he said little aloud, and listened but absently to Fanny.

"It's not that I don't trust you," Fanny was explaining; "it's that I don't trust them! Yes, I perfectly know what I'm letting myself in for, when I say that!"

Chan laughed. "They'd all have to take off their hats to you!" he said; "you're the real thing in the New Woman. The rest can smash windows and welcome; 'tis you go after what you want, and get away with it too!"

There was a core of tenderness within the teasing, that fed Fanny's hunger. He drew her down to him, a boy to her motherhood; and she fell upon him with passionate kisses.

XII

BERYL'S IDEA

CHAPTER XII

BERYL'S IDEA

TOM and Beryl were both good walkers, and she agreed, with more pleasure than she usually showed, with his idea that they should put the car up, and walk across the bridge at leisure. The full April moon shone over the quiet water, with a cool, yet to Tom it seemed a prophetic, light; whispering of the coming hour when the now leafless branches of the carefully stationed shrubbery along the waterside should, almost audibly, shake out their leafbuds in clean burnt-umber and green, enchanting and smelling of leafy lanes, holding at arm's-length the greasy, rumbling trucks of Charles Street.

Tom, with the surprise of Beryl's passionate music stirring in his mind, had a half-formed idea of her as resembling these half-awakened trees. The two stopped to look at the new "Technology" buildings, rising

like a Camelot, across the water against the moon-lit horizon. "Awfully nice, isn't it!" Tom exclaimed; but while Beryl looked at the magically illumined pillars and arches, he looked at her, and she too stood illumined. Her tall figure matched his own. She did not lean against the parapet, in the graceful feminine attitude that Tom's earlier best-girls had accustomed him to. She stood erect and unsupported, her calm face lifted to the silver moonlight, and haloed by the softened gold of her hair, as her hat swung idly from the relaxed hand at her side. She was still, but she was not stiff; rather, a lily — that hackneyed figure would come back — unswayed by wind.

It was not lost, for Tom; the *abandon* with which this girl had played the piano part for Tante's rendering of Rubinstein's *Du Bist Wie Eine Blume*. Had these depths of feeling lain dormant in the girl's under-consciousness, or had the feelings raised their heads, only to be snubbed by her foolish lecture-room psychology!

Tom had the queerest book-agent notion of getting one foot in, before she could shut the door on him. He could see that she was

under the spell of the night, and he ventured on a sudden home-thrust: "You look as cool as the moon, Beryl," he said softly; "but I know better, now I've heard you play." He found himself expecting the lovely, stately head to turn — if only to turn away — but there was no change in the motionless figure.

Tom went on, very fast: "You see, you've bowled me over, Beryl. You can't go about doing that sort of thing, without taking the consequences." The challenge on his lips, he seized the hand nearest him — the other held the pendant hat — and raised it to his lips. The quality of her reticence checked him.

She turned around, very simply, and said with her curious directness of speech, "I am sorry. I do not feel that, myself, nor can I hold myself responsible for unwittingly arousing it in others. Many value this sort of tribute to woman. I do not happen to."

"You *are* a woman?" asked Tom with asperity; "not merely a student?"

"Would you wish me to tell you how my life is mapped out, Mr. Brinkerhoff — Tom?" she carefully emended.

"I should like nothing better," said Tom.

"I wish to live as Spinoza lived," the meek voice went obstinately on; "he earned his bread by cutting lenses, a perfectly mechanical labor; leaving his spirit free, and his mental methods intact. I wish to do that."

"But how in thunder, Beryl? If you could go about, even so 'mechanically' that your bread and butter was not only earned but swallowed for you, — and that's the sort of thing machinery is going to do pretty soon — what of that? The Good Book tells you that you can't save your life without giving it. You can't get very far on any road, music, painting, without using your spiritual voltage. Horse-power, candle-power" — Tom grew inarticulate — "have you never heard that it's love that makes the world go round?" he finished triumphantly.

The next day, before Beryl joined the little party in Tom's studio, Chan asked him: "Did you get at her? What do you make of her?" Tom was suffering from a reaction. "She's a lily, all right," he said, with an air of a connoisseur; "but — for keeps, give me a nice, glad-faced, round, yellow dandelion!"

XIII

TOM'S IDEA

CHAPTER XIII

TOM'S IDEA

TOM'S studio, "as big as our whole house," Fanny remarked, was crammed with pictures. This was one of the endless arguments between Tom and Chandler; generally winding up with Tom's violent statement that Chan "didn't have enough good things" to crowd any wall with! followed by the retort: "If I had, even lovely things like these, I'd bury nine-tenths of them, if I had to do it by lot, man, and give the rest a chance!" "Tom thinks of a house as a place to hang his pictures," Fanny would say; "and Chan thinks of the house as the work of art, to which the pictures are a subordinate contribution."

Except for the walls, however, the studio was bare and specially planned for music. At one end a wide window gave on a garden, with the embankment of the Charles River

Basin beyond it. In the curve of the window "bow," was placed a very good Steinway grand, of the concert size; flanked by cases for stringed instruments and cabinets for music.

On the edge of the model-stand, which was pushed into the background for the music, Tante sat down by Fanny, and spoke in an undertone: "Come and play for my songs, you!" she murmured. "Chan will like it. You must not let Beryl bear off all the prizes."

"He wouldn't like it!" said Fanny; "he would see the difference."

"Chan likes ability; why not play up to that? Is that not your expression? Let me give you some lessons. You could go far."

"How you understand Channie! Yes, he likes ability. I will tell you something amusing. I overheard one of his relatives say to another: 'He worships brains in woman, and that's why he went to Chicago for a wife.' He's always saying that woman's equality, talked about in Boston, in Chicago exists! You know, dear Tante, that that is Chan's idea of the woman's rights question:

that her right is, first of all, an equally severe training with men toward a professional life of some sort; that is more respected in Chicago. But — *moi!* — I can only give lectures; and it is only an art, like music, that belongs to a home."

"But we shall complete what has already charmed him in your education," said Tante, with her winning smile, and a little pat on Fanny's hand; "we shall make of you also a *pianiste!*"

Tante rose, and began tuning her cello. The group at the other end of the room were examining a portfolio of Japanese prints. But as the cello sang the first strains of the *Marseillaise*, Beryl slipped to the piano, as if drawn there by a magnet. The stirring chords her fingers brought out, as if by an uncontrollable instinct of their own — for Beryl's face was calm — grandly supported the voice of the cello, till everybody joined in the chorus, Chan doing his best with the Stainer fiddle:

"*Aux armes! aux armes!*" Beryl's voice rang suddenly out, with the quality of a bugle.

"But — you are a French woman!" cried

Tante, with tears in her eyes, resting her cello carefully in the corner, before she turned and flung her arms around Beryl.

"Yes, Madame," said Beryl, smiling her inscrutable smile, so sweet and so distant; "my mother was *Parisienne*."

"Why didn't you ever tell us?" asked Fanny, resenting, she could scarcely have said what; while Tante, her arm still about the seated girl's shoulder, murmured over her golden hair: "Ah, I have it now — your genius — and a French woman does not flatter! — *l'impetuosité* of the little French mother, within the skin of *l'anglais*, through which — oh, it can not quite make itself felt! Pardon an old woman, my child. You have this afternoon made me young again. Is there any such service as that? You have brought back for me a day we spent in Strasbourg. It was an anniversary, upon which my adored mother — who was an Alsatian, although she lived her married life in Paris — privately, with a very few French sympathizers who could be trusted, sang the *Marseillaise*, as those dear lads sang it who first marched out of Strasbourg to its music, against the Prussians! We sang it with this

very cello, *chérie*, in the cellar of a house, a little distance out from the centre of the town. We risked all, even in so remote a neighborhood. But we did not then sing more from the heart than this dear child today! It is in the blood."

Beryl got up, trembling and very white, but otherwise composed. "I will go over now to your house, please, Fanny: If you will allow it. No, thank you, Mr. Brinkerhoff; it is but two blocks."

"But," stammered Tom, "aren't you going to stop for our little feed? I've admired your cooking, and I want you to admire mine! That's only fair, you know!" But when he turned to find the key of a tiny cupboard in the chimneyplace, Beryl slipped out.

"Queer duck that!" Tom admitted himself "peeved." "Plays your very heart out on your sleeve with her heavenly music, and then merely walks off and leaves it there! Did you ever treat Chan like that, Fanny? Says she prefers Spinoza — *Spinoza* — to your humble servant. I say I can make her happy and stand ready to pledge my life to doing so. She responds that she doesn't

'care for' happiness. She has set her life to the 'one poem in the world she finds the truest,' forsooth! — *Il Penseroso.* I could turn Englishman and say, 'Fahncy!'" Then Tom's voice, almost breaking with rage, took another turn: "Hi, there, Chan! you'll shake the kettle off the tripod, laughing like that! She was perfectly serious. She said it off as if she were making it up as she went along:

Find out the peaceful heritage,
The hairy gown and mossy cell,
Till old experience do attain
To something like prophetic strain.

"You see, I never remembered four lines of poetry before in my life! I swear I never could!"

"I understand her a little, because I've talked with her about it," said Fanny; "she is in dead earnest. She says that it is to queer, separate people that the spiritual visions come. And she wants to be like that."

"So, there's very, very little hope for a chap of my sort," groaned Tom; "but how is it done? How did you do it, Chan?

This is the first time I've really wanted to win out!"

"Ask Fanny!" said Chandler, with a little grin. Fanny's face was flame, but she spoke seriously: "Once, out in the west, I was caught in a cyclone. I got inside a building, and glanced back; and I saw a horse and wagon, tearing down the street like an autumn leaf. The wind was doing the driving. And the horse had his head over his shoulder, in the most comical look of honest bewilderment you can imagine. I think love is like that. You don't 'fall' in love; you're pushed in, with a wind at your back that bloweth as it listeth, and you hear the sound thereof, but know not whence it cometh nor whither it goeth."

Tom's imagination did his best at this: "But," he said, "she has got to be on the right road, before any pushing is going to work!"

"The wind of her doctrine seems to blow her the other way," said Chan.

"Within the heart of the hermitess," said Tante, "may dwell the coquette!"

"Oh, no! not that!" cried Fanny, as if struck. "How can you, dear?" But Tom

looked thoughtful. "I've an idea," he remarked, "of trying her in my new car! A little speed might do something!"

"Confess!" said Fanny to Tom, with her goodbye; "you looked up that *Penseroso* afterward, and learned it off by heart."

XIV

OVERHEARD AT A TEA

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ONE afternoon in late May, when the spring had fulfilled the promise of April, and even the trees along the dusty streets looked as if done in fresh, clean watercolors, Tante gave a tea, to close the "little" after-Easter season.

Fanny, rejoicing in Chan's being at home "for good," had the previous evening suffered a great disappointment in his sudden and but vaguely explained decision to "run over to New York" — just for the day; something about a "little final touch to the portrait job."

But as she walked down the embankment to Tante's apartment, her blues seemed visibly dispersed across the enchanting water. The soft, fragrant breeze; the sunshine, freed from its April fitfulness, and not yet prosaic with midsummer monotony; the organ-grinder "Wearin' o' the Green" to the gurgles of

childish laughter from an open window above — it would have taken a less impressionable person than Fanny to resist the lift of the spirit that was in the day. She rang Tante's bell in one of her mountain moods.

Among the people filling, but not crowding, the rooms, for Tante had the French reticence in the limiting of her invitations, and applied to her guests the careful sense of values that Chan applied to the placing of pictures — crowding the chief crime! — Fanny walked, that afternoon, an impersonation of the season. So young she looked; so vivid and free; and girlish, yet with a hint in the very carriage of her head, of dignities to come; that an elderly gentleman remarked to Tante, with tears in his eyes: "That little lady wakes us up! She's like the choirboys after the sermon. We need her here in Boston."

Very sensitive to the criticism of Chan's friends, Fanny was just beginning to feel secure of place among them, as the first appraising look had now given way to the welcoming "Oh, it's you, Fan!"

A little later, fatigued and ready for her tea, she sank down for a quiet moment in a low seat behind an alcove curtain. There

she became aware of a low but particularly distinct voice: "There's an artist that has been in New York this winter, painting portraits of friends next-door to us, Chandler Morton; do you know him?" And then, after a simple yes — Fanny having a dazed expectation of perhaps hearing something about Chan's growing reputation which she could joyfully greet him with on his return — "Well, my dear, you know how frank I've always been about liking lots of money! But that poor devil of a painter-man would make the most amusing husband! He's clever and he's innocent, and yet he's so adorably dependent on having a woman around in his off hours — if you know what I mean. When he's working, he simply doesn't know you exist. But when he's through, if you're always there, he likes to unload himself. Oh, if you coax him a little, of course! I imagine he has a nice mother and sister at home, who make a little tin god of him. And he rather enjoys being kept guessing. He's got it in him to be a sport, but has never had any practice — if you know what I mean!"

Fanny's eyes were glued to a certain tiny

figure in the tapestry near her. Was that figure supporting the queer old canopy-thing held over the Queen's head in that procession of men and battle-axes? It was as if nature's protective process were guarding her bruised consciousness from farther hurt. Over and over the question pressed insistently on her mind, like the repetition of the tapestry in the endless procession: "Is he holding it up? or is that farther spot his right hand?" But afterwards, she could read the record, somehow made on her brain cells, of the words: "Well, Sabina, spoiled child, that's one thing you can't have. Chan Morton is married."

There was a moment of charged silence, and then the answering voice went on: "Yes! How funny he didn't tell! He married a western girl last Christmastime — Chicago. Awfully nice little thing, and pretty enough. She's here today. Our hostess, by a chance, is Chan's aunt! I'll find Fan and introduce her. Only don't tease her; she's not the sort to understand."

And then, the confident New York voice, turned incredulous, in the single, low exclamation: "Married!"

Fanny's walk home, along the Embankment, in the soft beginning of darkness, found her world "estranged." Sky, water; scarlet-tipped maple-buds and sunshine-filled forsythia: all, ghosts, corpses.

Oh, the very fibre of the words bequeathed us by men and women who had lived and suffered so long ago! But the words yet lived, fraught with their burden, ready for the new significance our woes should add to their load; torture, the "twist" within, when all the machinery of your life reversed; the tying in knots of all the smooth threads of your unsuspecting faith!

She stood at her own door. All the avenues that her quick mind had darted into for escape, all were *impasses!* No way out! Her Chan, who had filled her being, there in the Chicago days, with the unmatchable human joy of knowing herself the only one for him! He could be just the same to any other girl! to one particular girl — Sabina: who thought of him — and this was the sharpest pang of all — exactly as she, Fanny Morton, had thought of him in Chicago. Suppose he had been married then, or even "engaged"! Would he have gone home,

and mentioned her casually, — as he had alluded to Sabina Morrell? — Of course, it was Sabina!

By the time her trembling fingers had fitted the key into the hole, and she had stumbled rather blindly over the threshold, Fanny had nerved herself to the expectation of almost anything but what happened! — that Chan should be standing at the head of the stairs, looking exactly as usual. "Hello, Bran!" — he called down; — "is that the frock you and Tante so mysteriously concocted? black and tan! The tan should be yellower. But it's very nice. I once had a little dog named Brandy — "

Fanny, by that obscure sixth sense existing between closely mated husband and wife, saw that it was "all right." Nothing else could now ever, ever matter! — "Little fool!" she blamed herself; "is it for you, with your husband the man you know him, and your tiny little unborn son drinking of your soul, to let that soul go poor in faith?"

"Oh, Chan!" she almost groaned, as he, after his wont, arranged the cushions around her on the settle in front of the fire he had lit to welcome her — for the evening had

turned a little chill — "I'm — desperately happy!"

"Such a wonderful time at the tea? — or just so glad to have me home!"

Fanny secretly dried a tear or two, and they sat quiet in the pleasure of being together. Then Chan jumped up for the tongs, to put back a threatening spark and to lay a solid chunk of hickory on the sputtering bed of pine. "More doing, at first," remarked Fanny; "but as it gets quieter, it settles into the real fire that makes the home. You remember, Chan, back there in Chicago? when we peeked in on Father and Mother over their evening lamp, and I said, 'We won't be like that!' — Well, perhaps the steady trot over the familiar road — maybe that's the best there is? Yet it was the adventurous in me that reached out for you! — otherwise — " — she clasped her hands tightly; — "tell me, my husband, as truly as if our two lives depended on your honesty: — would you have asked me to marry you? — if I had waited! — Oh, *God*, if I had waited! Now I shall never, never be sure." Shuddering, she slipped to the floor.

Chan looked down at her, and his deep love had never so filled her being. "Darling little wifikins," he said; "I really don't know. I had always had a doubt about artists' marrying. But, if you hadn't then given yourself to me, I should have missed the best thing that life has ever brought me within eyeshot of. There has never been anything look so good to me as you, right now, Fanny Morton."

"Anything — or any*body?*" asked Fanny.

"Or anybody!" said Chan. And then he told her about Sabina. "I felt, at first, that we were in just for a pleasant little lark. I didn't speak of you, — why should I? Those people knew nothing of my private life, and it never occurred to me to think of the personal side of it. — And it wasn't till I got a little note from one of the others we saw a good deal of, referring to our 'engagement,' — which she had heard of as a bit of gossip, that I saw there might be some trouble. So I went right back to New York to see Sabina. But they tell me she's here, in Boston."

Then there happened one of those queer little "episodes" that belonged to life before

they were borrowed by the stage. Chan went out for "something to smoke," and in the moment of his absence, the boy that had been sent for a picture exhibited at the Fine Arts Club brought back, with the picture, a letter addressed to Chan in care of the club. Chan and Fanny had, as a matter of course, opened each other's letters in such a case. Fanny slit the edge of the envelope, and sat looking out at the wind-blown orange and smoky-reds of the western sky above the water. It was too dark to read, and she hated to light the lamp. It was probably one of those tiresome hanging-committee communications. Just their extravagant sort of paper.

She had not drawn the sheet from its envelope when Chan came in. As he bent over to kiss her, she lifted her face, fatigued with the afternoon's struggle but full of pleasure, and handed the letter to him. "Came with the picture," she said idly.

An unfamiliar look in Chan's familiar face caught her up. "What is it, dear?" she asked, — not yet quite steadied after the strain of the day, which had left her — differently from her usual mood — a little apprehensive.

"Nothing," he answered, in the unconvincing tone in which that word means nothing! — "Isn't dinner ready? I'll just dress. Mustn't let ourselves get slack in this spring weather." With that, he left her.

Presently he came back. Fanny noticed, by a splotch of cindery black still over one eyebrow — she had forgotten to warn him about it before he went out, — that he had not been "washing up." There was a look about him of a vague distress. "That," he said, handing her the letter, "is what I was afraid of."

Fanny read it:

My Dear Mortie,

Why did you get off without saying goodbye to me? If you were afraid of the consequences? — I shall be in Boston tomorrow, for a day or two at the Copley Plaza.

Even as Fanny read the strong, confident strokes of a wide stub-pen that had not hesitated as it moved across the heavy gray paper, a step was heard on the stair, and a high, musical voice at the door. Then Beryl ushered in Sabina. "This," Beryl said, with her grave monotonous voice that had an emphasis of its own, "is Mrs. Morton."

Her tone, like a recitative, an octave below the staccato question that it answered, gave Fanny a fresh sense of being at a play.

"How amusing!" Sabina gayly cried; "I did not know that you had a wife at all, Mr. Morton, and I find you with two lovely ones!" She turned her clever dark eyes from Beryl, who was noiselessly gliding out of the room, to Fanny, and held out her hand.

Fanny took it with perfect friendliness. "Let the dear spoiled man have three!" she said impulsively; "you'll stay to dinner, won't you? a simple little dinner, literally of herbs. I wasn't expecting Chandler, and I just wanted a salad. I went to a tea — "

"Oh!" said Sabina; "of course! — and not an hour ago! You were pointed out to me, as 'our golden bride.' But that charming hat was so big, I didn't see the gold. — Why do you ever let her wear a hat over it, Mortie? — Of course, I'll stay, Mrs. Mortie. It's cosier to call you that, if you don't mind?"

Sabina drew off an endless length of white glove, which Fanny kept always afterward as an impression of the scene; endless like the tricks magicians do for children.

As she slipped downstairs to arrange the table, Fanny heard her guest say to Chan, in her high, imperious voice: "It's all right, Mort, and *she's* perfectly all right. See that you deserve her"; — and then, at the street door: "Tell her I've changed my mind about making the third wife!"

But, the following morning, after Chan had gone to a teaching engagement, Sabina's little electric machine drew up at the curb, and Fanny, sitting at the window from which she had watched Chan's going, ran to the door with her ready welcome. All sorts of things flashed through her mind in whirls of speed: how stunning Sabina's clothes were! what beautiful dark eyes! — She, Fanny, was Chan's wife. But — *if!* — would this tall, haughty, sweeping sort of girl have more completely satisfied Chan's continual search after distinction? — If he had come back from Chicago, free to marry this girl of New York and Paris? — she could hear all the other "Sewing Circle" girls, crying out — even if with some envy, "How adorable they look together!"

Sabina was bending to take Fanny's hand; her friendliness was of a quality that won.

"I'm going back to New York in a few days," she said; "and I just want to see all of you two that I possibly can. I've no doubt your husband has told you about me; yet he wouldn't have told you, because he wouldn't have known, what a blow it was to me to find *you*. We women are known by our labels — Mrs. or Miss! — but the men! — one makes mistakes. Now I'm simply determined to get just as fond of you as I am of him. As a preliminary, will you kiss me?"

"I'd *love* to," said Fanny, lifting a face full of the frankest pleasure.

"Signed and sealed," said Sabina, taking a seat; "Now I want to tell you also that your husband is one in a million. Just an unprejudiced opinion. As a rich girl, you see them! — and I never saw one like him. He takes, but he gives, and it's all with such a charm and freedom. But — when I say 'freedom'! — I never could get him over. He made a mistake in not telling me about you. I rather teased him, — because I thought it was just too much New England in him! — that he couldn't let go. But he simply wasn't thinking of it the way I

was. We weren't playing the same game. But I just wanted you to know — badly as I'm putting it — you know what gossip is, and I am awfully afraid I may have set some going — but I'll manage *that!*"

"I overheard — at the tea — " Fanny stammered, and then burst into tears. Sabina's black eyes changed from an almost metallic glitter into the soft blackness of a pansy. "You poor darling! Then you had the quarter-of-an-hour I dreaded for you." She paused, looking her sympathy.

"As I walked home," Fanny went on, "it seemed, as it does in awful physical pain, as if I simply, from each moment to the next, couldn't endure one more pang. — I thought Chan had gone off down there because he —"

With her scrap of lace handkerchief, in amusing contrast with Fanny's honest square of linen unadorned, Sabina gave a careful dab at her eyes, turning to glance into the mirror behind her; and came face to face with Chandler. — "I came in to ask myself to dinner tonight," she said, easily; "I want to know your wife."

"Pretty nice little wife!" said Chan.

"Top notch," said Sabina.

XV

A PREMONITION

CHAPTER XV

A PREMONITION

TOM and Chan had been working hard all the afternoon in Tom's studio, painting a head of Beryl. They were serious painters and she was a serious sitter; with the result that the three reached Fanny's dinner-table in a state that Tom described as "all in."

Fanny met them at the door. "Mercy!" cried Chan; "what have you been doing to yourself?" She drew him into the little reception-room, which, with the somewhat larger dining-room behind, made up the whole first floor of the wee house, and revolved, smiling, before him. "You look as if you were the hanging-committee and I were a doubtful picture," she said; "don't you like me? It's the mode. Sabina did it." Her hair, usually piled high and loose, was coiled closely around her head, following the modeling so smoothly that the contour

of face and hair seemed carved out of a single piece. "Do you hear her? Tom's surprised her — or she's surprised him, in the bookroom!"

Chan's face lighted with a quick pleasure, and he bounded up the stairs. "Hello!" he cried to Sabina, who advanced to meet him, regal in a dinner-gown of midnight blue, with a single ornament — a necklace of old Roman mosaic. Fanny was wearing — wearing *out*, she would have said, — a girlish-looking frock of pale blue chiffon, very much in need of pressing. As she followed Chan, and saw the meeting, she was at once conscious of the difference in dress, and of the change in Chan's expression — from fatigue to gayety.

Tante, coming forward from the other side of the room, saw all this, and — just for a fraction of a second — frowned at Chan. But he didn't even notice. He was in the mood to take his pleasure where he found it, and that was — plainly — in Sabina.

"Hello, Mort!" she said, familiarly; "and his "Hello, Bean; you're looking fit to-night" smote on poor Fanny's ear, with its note of all that had passed between them. "I must

just get over this," Fanny inwardly censured herself, dashing the cool, clear water of reason on her impulsive, hot resentment. With Tante, she gaily led the way down to dinner, talking in the easy key of high spirits set by her guest, while she heard Sabina say, "My last night here, — got to go back to little old New York — wanted to leave a good impression!"

"Did Mortie ever tell you about Dieudonnée, Mrs. Mortie?" asked Sabina, taking the indicated chair at Chan's left, opposite Tante. "I assure you I wasn't in the picture that day!" With his eyes still on Sabina, Chan laughed a little nervously. "Shall I tell them?" she challenged him.

"What is there to tell?" he said.

"She was a little Italian — or something — violinist," Sabina went on gaily; "black eyes — square chin — messy hair, — not a beauty. But — her tone! Some of us had her give a little musicale at our house, before we sent her to Paris for study. — Mort's forever asking me what I'm doing for the Arts!" — she appealed to Tom, on her left; "I leave it to you, Mr. Brinkerhoff! — Put that down for us! —"

There was borne in on Fanny's mind a quick new sense of the pleasure to Chan's nature of these wide horizons created by money! and she stifled a little sigh. Sabina's talk was directed again to her.

"And that little swaying figure on our tiny stage, and the music-room packed with people absolutely quiet! Absolutely! People one never knew to stop talking for music, before! — Shall you ever forget it, Mortie?" She turned her lovely dark head toward Chan again, and nibbled a crouton. Chan was eating nothing. — "Just that bow, on those four strings, and it was like a shuttle weaving — weaving, out of that stillness, a mystical fabric of sound."

"Temple not made with hands," breathed Fanny reverently.

"The child was an Armenian," said Chan.

"And because her ancient race had so suffered and survived," said Tante, "this gifted child had received the inheritance of pain. But on her fresh young heart, the finger of God had written the only answer we have here on earth — music!"

"What did you do with the sketch you made of her, Mort?" asked Sabina, restless under

so much solemnity; she turned to Fanny: "make him give it to you. Some day, when she's famous, it will be a fortune for you. — A wonderful little figure — standing there, with bow poised over the strings, and a look of waiting for the gods to arrive! — Well, *we* simply couldn't do anything with your man after that day! — None of us could pronounce her name, so we called her Dieu-donnée. But afterwards, we called her his Beatrice. Her Dante simply hid himself after that; said that she had reminded him of what Art meant. — Not another song and dance could we drag him to. — How were we to know," she turned to Fanny with her confident smile; — "that the real original Beatrice was feeding the divine fire with daily letters from Brimmer Street?"

"You might have called her *Pippa*," said Fanny, laughing. "*Good!*" said Sabina; "she gets our goat every time, old Mort!"

Tante was obliged to "fly," after dinner, to an evening engagement in Cambridge. The taxi at the door, Beryl stood helping her with her wraps.

"You said nothing at dinner!" Tante murmured, in her low, coaxing tone; "what

was that busy brain of yours about, dear child?"

Beryl had always the simple, straightforward response for such a bidding; and, if she hesitated a little, it was only for the right words for a somewhat inarticulate thought. "I was looking at them together," she said; "Mr. Morton has such a fire of thinking and feeling, almost it consumes him; but he wears a mask — for his protection from people's perceiving this. Mrs. Morton — her profile, so innocent: a *white* fire."

"Ah!" said Tante, noticing the curious look of the seer in the girl's eyes; "and what of Miss Morrell?" Beryl's rapt look dropped away, and she spoke conventionally: "She is very pleasant."

"But you don't like her?" — Beryl smiled enigmatically, but did not answer.

As Sabina left the house, an hour later, she whispered in Fanny's ear: "You've been such an angel to me! You're the rich one, you know, for you've got Chandler. I only divert him — from his real interest. Diversion often looks jollier, but in the long run, it isn't! — But I've got money. And

that comes in handy sometimes too. I want you to promise me — for my love to you both — illness or anything? you will? — to prove you really love me too?" — Fanny, with no premonition of need, gave her promise as she would, from generous impulse, have given any favor within her power.

XVI

FAN'S CHALLENGE

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FAN'S CHALLENGE

THEIR guests gone, Fanny and Chan sat together before the bookroom fire for their usual half-hour before going up to bed. Chan smoked, and Fanny talked. "Why are you such an oyster, Chan?" she asked with exasperation in her voice; "I should think that you would have told me about the little Armenian violinist. It's getting to be like this — you sit and smoke and ask a few monosyllabic questions, and I, delighted to have you sitting here and not on the jump as you are all day, start in and talk — whether you listen or not! — Do you wish I smoked a cigarette with you like Sabina?"

"I'd rather you didn't," said Chan, answering her questions in reverse order; "why don't I tell you things? That's what Mama used to ask — dear old lady! — I don't know, I'm sure. Every man does it. A new face

— a fresh audience — will start him off. But his wife is his wife. Ask anybody."

"My father always tells Mother everything that comes up — "

"Oh, a minister!" cried Chan impatiently.

"I wish you wouldn't give those little digs at clergymen," said Fanny; "it's bad taste."

Chan got up and poked the fire. "Is it so?" he asked sharply; "no use, blinking facts. You're awfully ignorant of men, Fanny."

"It brings people closer," persisted Fanny; "it's more natural, I think."

"Not if they have to relate things to each other; a wife can *sense* things, and her husband always wants her to know them, without his saying them. Not by asking questions! — you sort of catch on here and there — a word, or a mood — a suggestion — that's my idea of a woman! — never caught napping!"

"You do say the most absolutely unreasonable things I ever heard a human being utter," said Fanny; "but you do put your finger on the facts of life provokingly. They are unreasonable too! I know the perceiving sort you mean, like Tante."

"Was that Mrs. Robert B. Leroy that came in as I went out?" asked Chan.

"Yes. Who else could it be? Nobody else soars from her limousine to your front doorstep with quite that spread of the wing!"

"What did she have to say for herself?"

"Oh, the old, old story. I know it by heart now. How simply thrilling it must be, to be married to a great artist! — But — do I perhaps paint too? — or just keep the dear thing fed and warm and comfy, for his masterpieces!"

"Did she say anything about the pictures at the show?"

"Oh, yes; the customary adjectives and interjections: 'corking,' 'ripping'; 'Gee, but that was the real thing!'"

"Did she speak of the sketch I did of that little Barbara Wellman, in her nursery? You remember my idea of making a child's portrait in a room, for the scaling down of the size — the child's head just up to the table top — the way you like to remember it in after years. It's her niece, you know — but you never *do* know! There's the thing you've got to catch on to, in Boston, dear! — Wellman's her brother."

"I don't think she spoke of that portrait," began Fanny.

"Don't *think?* — don't you *know?*" demanded Chan.

Fanny laughed. "Your idea seems to be for the *man* to ask questions *ad infinitum*," she said; "where's your artist's power of intuitive perception? It would be just as easy for you to know what Mrs. Leroy said, as for me to know about a little Armenian violinist in New York."

"Well," said Chan, "I want to know —"

"So did I," said Fanny.

The fire was sufficiently out to be left for the night. Chan gave it a final poke; then turned to Fanny with his most teasing, loving grin: "Would you rather have had a husband who could keep you in expensive frocks, like Bean Morrell's?"

"*Dear* Chan!" murmured Fanny, for answer.

"Dear-Channing me is no answer," he said; " — but what else did Mrs. Leroy say?"

XVII

THE OLD FARM

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THE OLD FARM

WITH the middle of June would come Beryl's graduation. Fanny and Chan advised her to accept a classmate's invitation to spend with her in Cambridge the final two weeks of examinations, with their spurts of cramming and their intervals of spreads and dances. Beryl detested the whole thing, but with her usual outward equanimity resigned herself to the situation, enabling Fanny to close the Brimmer Street house the first of June.

Chan had discovered a tranquil old farm, with a Seventeenth Century house, oak-beamed with a huge brick pile of a chimney in the center, giving three ten-foot fireplaces on the first floor, and width enough even in those above stairs for uncut cordwood. The place was down in the lovely "Whittier" country, in the Merrimac Valley; still remote from mills and factories and foreign

populations. "A ramshackle farm," Fan said to Tante. "But what is that?" asked Tante, who still had her difficulties with colloquial English. "I will read you," said Fanny, picking up a book of Frank Stockton's: "This is Mike, in The Girl at Cobhurst: 'Ramshackle farmin' means takin' things as you find 'em, and makin' 'em do, and what you git you've got. But, with the other kind of farmin', most times what you git ye have to pay out, and then you ain't got nothin'!'"

"The advantage of the ramshackle kind, hereabouts," said Chan, "is the saving of the old things. Even if the old panel over the fireplace may have been taken down, to fit in an airtight, you'll find the panel about somewhere! in the coalbin or the henyard. And you can put it back."

The high grass, waving in the western breeze like the surface of some wide green sea, with tints of timothy and sorrel in spots, was a symbol of the peace and beauty of the place.

"We don't start gettin' in the hay till the week o' the Fourth," explained the old man who had been running the place by ram-

shackle methods for forty years, but was still known thereabouts as "Young Jim Marsh." Jim Senior still lived. "If you call it living," Chan commented, as he deposited his bag in the big, square "fore" chamber, with its pleasing proportions of low stud and white paneling, and its windows cheerfully open to the south and west. "I don't believe the man that built this house was a ramshackle. Look at it!"

"The men on these farms, when this house was built," said Fanny, "were statesmen — sat in front of that great hearth downstairs and discussed Washington's latest move. But, Chan, remember they had darkey slaves! Right here in Massachusetts. They were telling me about two of them on this place — their gravestones are up yonder, in the orchard: Coffee and Titus. You wouldn't want them back with your old architecture?"

"Well, I don't know," said Chan, with his humorous grin; "Coffee would come in very handy, to fill up this woodbox for instance."

"If Old Jim spends his days on the piazzy sofy," said Fan, "Jim the Third has abandoned the struggle — without Coffee and Titus — and gone up the road as a trolley motor-

man. All Old Jim ever says, Mary Liz tells me, is 'I told you so!' There isn't much in the life for the younger generation. There's Grandma, died in her nineties, still in harness; but Mrs. Jim fell out at forty. And now 'little' Mary Liz is all alone in the house, to cook and clean for the men."

"You've discovered a great deal in an hour, Fan!"

"I was interested," said Fanny simply, as Mary Liz called them to supper.

In the ancient, grassy orchard, with little green apples pelting her head like bullets; with the sky blue and white between ragged appleboughs; with robins nesting in the branches unafraid, for Mary Liz had put her foot down and would have no cat on the place; Fanny spent long precious days of great peace and of peaceful growth for the tiny being developing within her.

Everything seemed to be culminating for her happiness. From the Church-bred background of her mind there often thrilled the old hymn — the Advent Hymn — with its new and personal significance. Out there in the orchard, she would find herself singing it aloud:

"For, lo, the days are hastening on —
By prophet-bards foretold, —
When with the ever-circling years
Comes round the age of gold."

Her day hastening on! *her* little lump o' gold, as she had once heard an old mammy call the golden-headed little cherub in her charge.

Leaving Fanny to her morning of life-recruiting peace, Chan would go off in the woods or along the stretches of salt-meadow, with his sketching-kit and a thermos lunch; or he would get a fit of discouragement, and bring back an empty canvas; sharing with Fanny her cream-o'-tartar biscuit and fricas-seed chicken supplied by Mary Liz. (Her dried-apple pies, and the "mock-mince" made of green tomatoes, they abjured, saying they would wait for the strawberries just beginning to "come.") "Some difference," Chan remarked, "between seeing them 'come' on the vines that sprawled over the good, brown earth, and seeing them come in the stingily filled baskets of the Charles Street stalls!"

But, though Chan now and then took a whole day off — as Mary Liz phrased it — "laying back," and with Fanny drinking

in the fascinating procedures of Nature, he had not Fanny's patience with the deliberateness of Nature's methods. "Better that there should always be the five thousand two hundred and eighty feet in a mile," Fanny remembered Emerson; but Chan was for shortening the stretches. "There's where Art comes in," he insisted. "If that motorman-son would come home and run the farm, he could electrify the place — people and all! — and get out of his trolley track, and live. Let him put in an engine, and some piping up this hill from the river below there, and give his berries the extra water they need — correct Nature, and improve on her by rendering conditions uniform and independent of the chance that weather is. Let him mend up his chicken-coops with the same zeal that he puts into tinkering that wretched motorcycle of his, and not leave the fate of his strawberry beds to Mary Liz's casual '*Shoo-oo*'ings! — If motoring is what he must have, he could soon have motors all over the place, sawing the cord-wood, washing the clothes, and giving Mary Liz a show!"

"You'd better buy the farm, when the old man dies!" said Fanny, chaffing him; "Young

Jim'll sell, if he gets the chance to go on a milk *rout*, as he calls it. Then you can combine your ancient art and your modern science! It would be a great combination!"

"By Jove, I will!" said Chan, growing even more emphatic; "we'll give the Baby his natural right to start his roots in mother earth, and have his fibres bound up with the intimacies of the fields and the wild animals as much as the farm stock: — know them all! — horses and cows and pigs and chickens and ducks and squirrels and fieldmice and beetles — "

"You sound like Walt Whitman!"

"I feel like him. To lie here — and think of the town — it makes you lyrical over the common things. You've got to have the town in your head, of course. Now Mary Liz doesn't grow lyrical."

A more immediate vent for his enthusiasms Chan found in working up a pageant to celebrate Beryl's coming down after her Commencement. The plan included a long day of almost hysterical fun in the preparations, — with much propitiation of the inflexible Mary Liz, and the borrowing of three "rampageous young-ones" from the

Peters's farm. Late in the afternoon, Chan took the old white horse, Danny, with a two-wheeled meadow-cart, to the station, to meet Beryl, calling at the "office" for such letters as might have come in since the morning R. D. Fanny remained, to preside at the reception ceremonies.

As Danny, in a slow, weaving fashion all his own, was seen — an hour later — coming up the River Road, breaking into a gallop when he turned in at the home driveway, — for he was what is known in the country as "a barnyard horse," always in a hurry near the barn! — things began to happen. Chan's shoulders were soon shaking, — so hard he could scarcely hold the reins, but that didn't matter to old Danny. And even on Beryl's reticent lips, a slow, involuntary smile broke and lingered.

Along the driveway, to the left, went a barbed-wire fence, behind which were lined up the seven cows of the Marsh herd, looking — as only cows can look — at once stupidly and yearningly, across the road at the lush-growing grass intended for their winter supply of hay. There were six Holsteins, black and white, and a little creamcolored, cream-

giving Alderney; and all seven whisking tails performed their pendulum-like motions with uncommon alacrity, to get rid — not of flies, — but of huge bows of streaming ribbon in Beryl's class colors, blue and orange.

Dodging under the clumsy hoofs of the cows, clucking nervously, every now and then plunging upwards to swinging footholds in the fence-wires, went the entire harem of the only *paterfamilias* of fowls left by the summer-boarders' fondness for fricassees. Such blue-and-orange flags and pennants as floated from necks, wings, tails — as the particular decorator had in each case elected! Here, a *materfamilias* flapped wide, brooding wings besashed like a small child at her first party; there, a couple of gawky half-growns lifted as daintily as a lady's train their long sprawling yellow feet, with the inevitable ribbons fastened to what the littlest Peters called their ankles.

Around the barn, let loose by Young Jim (wearing across his broad blue-bloused shoulders the "colors" in cheesecloth), came, squealing with the general excitement, a regiment of little fat white pigs, clean as

kittens. In the background raced the bedecked Peters young-ones. Old Jim, as if cast for the part — so essentially dramatic is life, at moments, even taken at random — played his role of disapproving chorus: "*There!*" — as the dogs went madly past, chewing and dragging their rejected ornaments: — "*I told you so!*"

"How like Chan, to come down here and start things up!" thought Fanny, as she walked around, seeing to it that the Peters young-ones had plenty of the candy Mary Liz had made, and Danny his special oats in honor of the day. Chan was dancing with the children, one at a time, — to a chorus of shrieks from *all* at a time, — "pickaback" on his tall shoulders; round and round they went, among the squealing pigs, the hoarse chickens, the leaping dogs, — the whole mad uproar accompanied by Young Jim's graphophone playing "Pop Goes the Weasel!" Young Jim himself, in the intervals of starting and stopping his machine, gamboled about with cowlike movements, with variations of a series of somersaults executed down the grassy slope toward the driveway. Beryl, with a detectivelike casualness of manner,

noticed everything and said nothing. Mary Liz, in the habit of long-repressed youth, seemed half frantic with the anarchy out of which she was totally unfitted to get any pleasure.

Fanny sat on a little knoll, at a safe distance from all the tumbling performers, resting and musing for a moment. "It is only another phase of Chan's idea about shortening up the five thousand two hundred and eighty feet to the mile," she put it to herself. She had accepted the country pace — the vegetable existence, if you liked! — Chan joined her, wanting to be assured that she was not too tired. "It is the difference between us," she said to him; "I accept the conditions and adapt myself; you seize the elements of the scene and create something vitalized with your purpose: The active and the passive sex! — Ah, how that would annoy my college friends — Isabelle Duncan, who's gone into Law, and Dr. Mabel Thurber."

"I'm not so sure!" said Chan, teasingly; "were you so passive — back in Chicago?"

Fanny colored. "Yes," she said; "I've come to see that, even there, I did not create

the situation. I recognized it — and put it into words! — Words are my medium, as colors are yours, perhaps."

"Blue and orange for instance?" Chan laughed, and looked over at the ribbon-bestrewed lawn. Then he took from his pocket two letters and handed them to Fanny; "Better go up in the orchard, where it's quieter and read those," he said; "I read them while I waited for Beryl's train. I expect Tom here any minute now!"

One of the letters, with Tante's writing on the envelope, was from Sabina to Tante, with a request that it be forwarded to Fanny.

Sabina's clear, bold handwriting filled several pages with a comparatively short note:

"*This is to tell you that my engagement is to be announced tonight. You have never heard of Henry Satterlee. But — you will. He is a young and struggling artist of great talent.* I *say so!*

"*I want you to know — and Mrs. Chan Morton — Fanny — if you agree, — that it is because I have seen in old 'Mort' how an artist can love a woman, that I have accepted Harry. If this sounds cryptic, never mind!*

Take it from me! and I should like Fanny Morton to know that it's one thing more I have, to thank her *for — sweet thing! — But I felt — just at this time — perhaps it would better reach her through you. You'll know just how to put it — and whether to send this straight to her — which is what I should prefer.*"

Across the first page went a postscript: "*This only strengthens the bindingness of Fanny's promise to me.*"

Tom's note, equally happy, was shorter still:

DEAR FANNY AND CHANNY,

Tell Miss Beryl A. B. that I'm coming down there to affix some more of the alphabet to her name — T. B.!

XIII

CHAN'S ERRAND TO STRASBOURG

CHAPTER XVIII

CHAN'S ERRAND TO STRASBOURG

THE letters in one hand, her long train of blue and orange cheesecloth in the other, Fanny stepped cautiously down the path already trodden at the edge of the orchard; for to cross a hayfield in June, even in a ramshackle farm, is not the code.

Hidden by the tall grass, she thus came unexpectedly among the dancers on the "lawn." She was just in time to see Young Jim, in great excitement, run to shut off his phonograph in the middle of the Merry Widow waltz, while everybody gazed up at the sky, southward. The dogs had begun it, with uneasy bayings; the horses, loose in the next field; the cows, the chickens, the pigs — all were, almost instantly, fleeing, as in an exodus from a bombarded city, to the farthest limits of their enclosures. It was all so sudden, and so funny to watch,

that — just for an instant — Fanny forgot to look up herself. And in that instant, the thing was upon them.

With a sharply increasing *buzz-zz-zzz*, like the drone of a bumblebee magnified a hundred times, circling and bumping nearer and nearer to one's ear; in motion, like some huge condor in flight; the aviator selected a landingplace beyond the barn, and volplaned gracefully to earth, — turning, with each instant of time and each foot of space more visibly, into — Tom! *Tom*, of course!

With the impatience that he always showed in jumping out of his automobile before it stopped, he now threw up the front of his machine, banking the planes against the light wind; shut off the power, and as the rear wheels rolled lightly along on the level, sprang out with a country greeting: "*Hi* there!"

"*Je vous comprends!*" said Fanny to Tom; "which is to say — I get you."

"I thought you'd see," said Tom a bit vaguely, not interested in philology. "Ah, there she comes!" — "What is it all about?" asked Chan, for once more curious than quick-witted. — "Fan'll tell you!" Tom was

making his lowest bow before the stateliness of Beryl, as she came across the grass, with the coin-gold of her hair set off by a knot of the blue-and-orange, in contrast with the severity of her plain gray-mohair dress. "She needs 'taking off her feet,' — was Tom's phrase," Fanny explained, absently, as she watched Tom persuade Beryl to "have a look" at his new machine.

The young Lochinvar's cue was speed. In a minute he had the girl in the single-passenger seat; in another, he was in his place at the wheel, the engine started, his hand on the elevator control. The whirring of the machinery drowned his parting shout. "She won't even get her feet wet," they made out, as they watched the plane, with pontoons adjusted, head for the river and go whizzing over the surface of the water, out of sight, round the bend, — to a chorus of barking dogs, cackling fowls, and cheering farm folk all along the bank.

"Tom's taking a gambling chance," was Chan's comment, as they turned back to the house. "It's either win out or lose out, this trip, I should say!"

"Beryl had that look of the horse in the

cyclone — remember?" said Fanny; "hurried along by something, much against her will."

"I can't wait for them to come back," she said, again and again, between laughing suspense and grave concern, — as the long midsummer afternoon sank in crimson and apple-green behind the western hills, and the last silver gleam on the river deadened to black.

But — between suspense and hope — she learned to wait, and that through many June afternoons; for there came no news.

And then, as she and Chan prolonged their stay at the farm into the "week o' the Fourth," and watched the ramshackle mowing-machine and the ramshackle blue cart, engineered by perspiring men and horses, slowly and fragrantly heaping the wide loft of the ancient barn with ramshackle hay (running from timothy and clover to witch-grass and bindweed), — suddenly appeared Tante! — with one of her great plans.

An uncle and aunt of her own were to celebrate their golden wedding in the autumn. She and the others of a group of cousins wished to give them one "worthwhile" thing,

instead of *les tous qui sont riens*. What better than two excellent copies of the two portraits — ancestral portraits — in Strasbourg? Five thousand dollars was the amount subscribed. It would take Chan away at a bad moment. But what would you? These things happen. She would stay with Fanny in the country. And the money — "for the little one!"

"Yes," Chan agreed, with his grin that always annoyed Tante when matters were "of a perfect seriousness"! — The money "looked good"; and Fanny eagerly assented. "Think of everything of the very best — all the things that come back to your bank account."

In less than a week, Chan was off. Declining to borrow any money for the trip, he surprised Fanny by the little saved-up sum he was able to leave with her, so that — pathetic phrase — she "needn't worry." This would have been explained if Tante and Fanny had gone up to town to see him off; for the cat in the bag was the fact that he had determined to take a leaf out of Stevenson's book and cross the Atlantic steerage. There was nothing to let the cat out — till

later! He said goodbye to them hastily, on the little old piazza, and with his Gladstone bag as sole luggage plunged off across the fields, impatient of Young Jim's harnessing of old Danny, and of the meandering river road.

When, with a final wave of his hand, he had disappeared over the hill, Fanny, with tears, imparted a bit of whimsical confidence: "You know, dear Tante, in some ways it is better for Chan to be away now. He doesn't a bit understand how wretched I feel some days. And, with his idea of my going on exactly as usual, to avoid what he calls dwelling on my condition, — and, well, sometimes it's a little not to have his own little ways interrupted, — he makes me so many steps! You know Chan!"

"Like my own hand," interrupted Tante; "and he's the most considerate of men. But the most considerate of men begin, in the scale, below the average-considerate of women, isn't it? I, on the other hand, shall now quite spoil you. Breakfast, always, before you rise; you must not lift your finger; and the light magazines instead of these frightful tomes!" — she picked up, with

a laughing effort, as of great weight, a volume lying on Fanny's candle table, and read the title aloud: "The Meaning of God in Human Experience"!

"What a funny, serious little thing she is!" was her inner thought, as she laid the book down. "After the child is arrived, she will be lighter. It is needed for Chandler's nature. He must not find all his gayety in Sabina Morrell."

XIX

TOM AND BERYL ON THE SHIP

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TOM AND BERYL ON THE SHIP

IN the warm summer afternoons, Tante preferred the shaded farm "parlor" to the sunbaked air outside. Fanny liked the piazza, and would sit out at the shady end of it, when it was too warm to walk, and — between bits of reading — would often enjoy talking with "Old Jim, "as he lay on the dingy cretonne-covered "sofy."

He would seem impassive — and then, suddenly, would put to her one of his searching questions. No one else ever listened to him, and his pleasure in Fanny's sympathy touched her.

Sharply, one day, he broke out: "What do you think God Almighty looks like, Mrs. Morton?"

As Fanny did not at once find an answer, he fixed his blue eyes, still vivid and kind, on her face, and said earnestly: "I think He's a very large, strong man — like you and

me"; he chuckled unexpectedly — "you see, I clean forgot you was a woman. You do seem more interested in things than the run o' women! Well, like *me*. Only about twict as big. The way a father looks to his little boy." The kind old eyes had a live-coal glow; he was seeing visions, and Fanny felt dumb before his look.

At last, she said quietly, "But if you make Him a man like that, He's only an ancestor, isn't He? I'd rather think of Him as closer! the Spirit, within, enfolding your own spirit; so that, when you die, the Great Spirit yields you up into the new life, just as my mother-body will yield up my baby-body into its new life. It's all so natural, that way — birth and death — the worn-out body and the soul that has got ready for its new world."

The old man looked, not so much blank as preoccupied. "I think He is a very tall, large man," he reiterated with unshaken conviction; "I expect to meet Him, and shake hands."

"Then you will," said Fanny; "He will give us all the loving handclasps we want, in the form that we can understand. I'm sure of that."

"You ben't so near it as I be, so you don't take it so much to heart," said the old man quietly, falling back into one of his frequent naps, that looked so like the last sleep.

Young Jim, appearing from the barn, where he had been "unhitching," — in his casual way, when letters were concerned — brought out a thin envelope he had got at the "office": Chan's handwriting! Fanny flew indoors, to share it with Tante.

"*I had not meant to tell you about going steerage,*" he wrote; "*this is just a scrawl to send back by the pilot. Something so funny has happened, I must write you. I had picked out a berth and left it a minute, protected as I supposed by my bag. But such is not the etiquette of the steerage. I had to haul a great lump of a Scandinavian out of it when I got back. Before undertaking that job, I thought I would just go out and have a last look at the shore. As a painter of faces, I got awfully interested in the first-cabin passengers hanging over their rail and looking down on us. You know, when you see another man on the street, even if he's an absolute stranger, there's a sort of fellow feeling in the glance that passes between you. But those people — darn 'em —*

looked at us as you look at cattle. And not even as you, Fan, look at cows! You see and are interested in the individual brutes! But to most, they are just an arrangement in cows. Well, I understood volumes about class feeling. From above, you simply don't know what you're talking about.

"And then, searching that mass of faces — have you guessed? — I saw Beryl and Tom, looking just as snobbish as the rest. Wait till I get at them.

"Goodbye, dear, or this won't get off.

C."

Remembering Old Jim's keen curiosity about the aeroplane voyagers, Fanny hurried out to tell him the news; thinking, as she went, how curiosity seemed to be the one sharp edge left to the dulled brain. Tante called after her, "He'll only say, 'I told you so!'"

But Old Jim would never roll that pleasant morsel off his tongue again. There he lay, just as she had left him. But his last curiosity had been gratified, and he knew how God greets his earthworn children when they come from school.

To Fanny, the old man's death brought

a profound comfort. It seemed a visible picture of the Earth Spirit's weaving: the rhythm of

Birth and Death
In infinite motion.

She who, with so passionate a love, awaited her baby, could with an equal passion foresee the welcome awaiting the old man's new birth.

She did not speak of it to Tante, who would have thought it only one of her strange notions. But she felt it the most real thing in her life — or, if that should come — in her death, — this welcoming love, ready for each new form of life.

XX

SABINA'S MARRIAGE

CHAPTER XX

SABINA'S MARRIAGE

SABINA was married, and she and her Henry were running over for their honeymoon in France. Fanny handed the letter to Tante, who stiffened perceptibly, on seeing Sabina's bold handwriting.

Isn't it simply thrilling, old Fan, having a real artist for your very own! What's more, we have a perfectly swell idea for our week in Paris. Hen and I will dig up your Chan, and Beryl and her Tom — wonderful wedding, have you heard about it? — dropping out of the skies into Tom's uncle's country parsonage! I'm sure I hope it was perfectly regular! Beryl would never know the diff. — And we'll have the three dears together in their old haunts, where they had their studios when they were little boys studying Art in Paris. Hen was younger than Mortie and Tom, but he adored them from beneath.

I suppose Chan, as you call him, will be

in Strasbourg, working twenty-five hours a day on those portraits. When Mort is like that, it doesn't matter whether your nose is perfectly powdered or whether it's greasy, or if you haven't any nose, like that funny, droll little Irish maid you had. It's all one to Mort. But that's precisely where he needs frivolous me. He has twenty days in Strasbourg, he wrote me; and it's only a matter of a hundred and fifty miles from Paris. My little new car that Dad gave us — waiting over there — will do it in a few hours. In between the blocking out of his pictures and the finishing, he'll need the fresh eye he talks about. Your devoted old

BEAN

Annoyed at herself for it, Fanny could yet not quite resist the quick little pang of jealousy. That it should be Bean and not she, to whom Chan would show all the intimate little corners of the experiences which had meant to him more than any other in his unmarried years! She gazed off on the fields, sloping down to the river. How he would leave the studio for a few minutes, in search of that "fresh eye"! She could see him, on old Danny, standing in the

stirrups, laughingly goading the clumsy old plough-horse into a stiff gallop across fields — lighting his cigarette, and calling to the little farm children to get on for a ride. Fanny's tears came. Then she dabbed them off, impatiently.

"I'm really just merely selfish," she said to herself; "I begrudge old Sabina her share of a delightful friend. Is that your idea of a college-trained superior sort of mind, Fanny Morton?"

"She might, perhaps, have given expression to the natural regret that you were not to be of the party," murmured Tante, coming out with her knitting.

"Oh, that's the sort of thing Sabina wouldn't say!" Fanny managed an affectionate smile, with no rancor in it. To herself, she finished her little sermon: "You've learned a good deal, but you've got to learn some more, and expand — till you're big enough to include Sabina!"

"She wouldn't mind a bit, if I gave Henry a motor drive," she went on, to Tante, driving off an impertinent bumblebee. "She'd just think it was awfully nice of me."

XXI

BUYING OUT YOUNG JIM

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BUYING OUT YOUNG JIM

FANNY had a hammock, swung under a wide-branching cherry tree, with a pleasant afternoon shadiness, and a lovely look out over the river and its old, low-browed houses on the farther side — the Whittier country. Here she spent many dreamy hours. And, with Old Jim gone, and Young Jim as anxious as ever to sell out and "go up on the Main Road, near the Church and the Movies," her dreams of buying the farm grew definite.

Chan loved it for its beauty, as she did, — for its charm of setting and atmosphere; and, particularly, for the unusually good type of old New England architecture found in the old house.

The great brick chimney in the center provided for three ten-foot fireplaces. The little entry held, between the doors to right and left, the stairs that climbed, in front

of the chimney, to give access to two corresponding doors on the second floor. The great square room downstairs on the right had the chimney side paneled, around the huge fireplace, with pine, dark and satiny with the use of two centuries. Overhead, heavy oak beams showed the marks of the axe, and ended in rough but interesting "lambs' tongues." Chan had planned how the old cranes and ovens could be restored, giving the room its dignified look of baronial hall.

The chamber above had also its fireplace, only a little less wide; its beams above, and its pine paneling. The rooms to the left of the entry, on the other hand, had been the "fore" room and the "fore" chamber; and were ceiled and paneled in white.

The lean-to had, on the side opposite the third ten-foot fireplace, five tiny-paned windows, looking down over the river; sheltered, "as a hen covered her little ones," with the long slope of roof from the attic ridgepole.

Chan, with his specialized knowledge and love of the old tradition so perfectly carried out, could — more completely than Fanny — blot out the Marshes' merciless wall-papers and rocking-chairs, upholstered "sets" and

fringed lamp shades, and supplant them, imaginatively, by bare paneling, white walls, oak tables, and candles.

Fanny's imagination warmed to the human interest of the old house and its successive generations. She would take old Danny and the little meadow-cart, and drive about the countryside, talking to all the aged people that had memories of the house as it was fifty years back; inhabited by two sisters, Miriam and Martha, and a brother Ebenezer, — all unmarried, and "deaf as haddocks"! Fanny loved the old men and women, who were so glad of an interested audience; and she was given many precious old documents, revealing this or that era of the old farm's history: in the days when Washington's contemporaries sat at meat in the "Hall"; when, in the fore room, the age-familiar ceremonies of wedding and of burial were held; in the wide chambers above, the more importunate scenes of death and of birth. The very stairways were, for Fanny, again trodden by the hurrying, careless feet of childhood and the hurrying, busy feet of motherhood and the halting, tired feet of old age. The air had its voices, young and

ringing, sombre and dominating, peaceful and querulous, and running through all the gamut of human utterance from the shrillest soprano to the profoundest bass.

Around that River Road, had gone the old family, on horse back, on foot, in the old chaise, over to "the Port," for the services at St. Paul's — with its special "slaves' gallery" for Coffee and Titus, and its Wardens' pew for the successive heads of such families as the Marshes.

With the warmth of all this at heart, Fanny sat down and wrote Chan about Old Jim's death, and Young Jim and Little Mary Liz's imminent determination to sell the place.

His letter in answer reached Fanny early in September:

"*Dear Fan,*" he wrote. "*In this high-roofed ancient house of Tante's Strasbourg ancestors, like an enormous dovecote, with its rows of windows, I got your letter, — just as Sabina arrived from Paris. She at once took up your idea of buying the farm. She says she can perfectly afford to help us out, and that nothing she could do with the money would so please her. She said something about your once*

having promised her this chance. She will buy, outright, at the price you mention. We are to pay her back, year by year, like rent. Of course, I should expect, as commissions come in, to do better than that. If you agree, just get an option or something, right off, from Young Jim. And write Bean — perhaps let yourself go a little more than you do with her, dear? — as you feel it, of course."

Poor, poor Fanny! She reread the letter, out there under her cherry tree, with the river flowing, oh, so peacefully, beyond. — She was glad Tante was in town for the day.

This was a test of her ability to "include" Sabina. It was like Sabina, always to include *her*. But, no. This she couldn't give into Sabina's hands! To be the one who bought the farm for Chan. It was she, Fanny, who loved the Place, and loved Chan; it should be love, not money, that settled ownership. Ah, was that what she meant? that Chan, too, belonged to her! It was the egoistic temper that she despised in herself.

And, if she should refuse, she would defraud not only Chan but her little coming baby of the best that was in her power to give him.

And — worst of all, Chan and Sabina, together, over there, would say to each other, "Dear little Fan! she doesn't understand!"

It was hateful, hateful, of fate to put it like that!

XXII
SABINA'S OPPORTUNITY

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SABINA'S OPPORTUNITY

THE next morning, Fanny woke to the sense of something wrong. Oh, yes, it was that offer of Sabina's about the farm. It must be definitely met, one way or the other, very soon. The idea of accepting it was, in the morning, freshly difficult; to reject it was equally impossible. What could she do?

She dressed slowly, chatting at random with Tante, who had brought in the coffee tray, and was full of pleasant little odds and ends of gossip from town — such as she thought light and fitting for Fanny's state.

All in a flash as she twisted a braid of her red-gold hair around her head, a sure premonition struck Fanny dumb, in the middle of an idle remark. "What were you saying?" asked Tante; and she answered, absently; while over and over she repeated to her conscious mind the little message that had

"come" to her, clear and urgent, and yet not quite articulate. It was a suggestion of waiting — waiting, about the farm, until — but that was where the vagueness began.

"I see my way as birds their trackless way.
I shall arrive!"

— the words of Browning's Paracelsus came to her, with a new comfort. And there continued in her mind, throughout the day, the sense of a presence, near her and loving her.

Later in the morning, she sat shelling peas with Little Mary Liz. One of the children had found in the pocket of one of Young Jim's blue jumpers, a letter he had forgotten to give Fanny, from Tom and Beryl. It began with one of Tom's ecstatic descriptions of Beryl's beauty — this time, as a bride, in the parsonage of his great-aunt in the New Hampshire country. And now she might be as Arctic-peaky as she liked — did Fanny remember the Brimmer Street days? — she was Mrs. Tom, God bless her! If he didn't, as Pygmalion, make good, it would not be through any flaw in his perfect statue. Wouldn't she be a wonderful model? And when would Fan and Morton visit them in Paris?

As Fanny smiled over the Tom so perfectly conjured up by his letter, Mary Liz turned out, with her deft, rapid, thumb strokes, row after row of the little shining green balls — the "fall crop," uncommonly successful in that mild season. The pods she threw into a big kettle, to be boiled down for the pigs' mash. And all the time, she seemed to be furtively watching for Fanny's attention. At last, she brought out, shyly,

"Couldn't you buy the farm, Mrs. Morton? It would be a grand summer residence, with all the pigs cleared away and the chickens and things — and the well cleaned out. You know Nat Burns died of the typhoid, and some said it was through not cleaning out the well."

"Why, isn't it cleaned every year?" asked Fanny.

"Oh, no'm! It's been five year and more now; since Baby Jim was a week old, I remember."

"But it's dangerous to let it go, like that," said Fanny; "I must ask the Doctor about some bottled water from town."

"But you could make it one fine place, you and Mr. Morton," Mary Liz went on,

ignoring any farther discussion of the well; "like the Traverses' on the hill."

Fanny smiled at the thought of Chan's taste turning out an ornate, belawned, gravel-pathed summer residence like the Traverses'. But Mary Liz, having said her say, made off with the peas and the pans, leaving Fanny to gaze in peace at the orchard, with its gemlike bits of radiant color among the green.

Then, gradually to the ear, there came the sound of a gallop up the driveway from the river road. Tante, ever on the alert in her watch over Fanny, was the first to reach the breathless boy, who jumped from the panting horse and handed her a telegram — a thing of greatest excitement in that placid countryside.

It was not even inclosed in an envelope, but brought hot from the excited penciling of the telephone operator, up in the "square." Tante was unable to shield Fanny from the shock of the perfectly unexpected news. Fanny's mother and father, taken suddenly ill with pneumonia, had died within a few hours of each other.

"Just as they would have prayed to go,

my darling!" murmured Tante over the bright, bowed head. But for Fanny's bitterest grief, she had no consolation. "I wanted my mother to see my baby. I wanted to love my mother and father more, now that I understand what it is to have a child. Dear Tante, I was always so ungrateful and such a trial to them. And I thought they didn't understand me. And I never thought that I didn't understand them. Now it's too late." And still she kept repeating, through the day, "Now it's too late."

It was not till some time afterwards, when a legal letter reached her, from Chicago, that it came to Fanny that this was the problem solved. To have the Farm from Them! Oh, what a treasure! From her mother, who — countrybred, herself, — had always disliked the city living! It was as if from her lips had come that inner message which had turned out to be a promise.

The next day, Fanny woke, flushed and uneasy. "Perhaps it is the water, and I have typhoid," she said quietly to Tante, who was approaching with her clinical thermometer.

"What does it say?" Fanny asked persistently, as Tante, five minutes later, at the window, seemed to find the reading difficult. Fanny would never accept evasive answers, and the facts were alarming. Tante turned to the bubbling water over the little alcohol flame, and — making a little rattle with a newspaper to keep the snap from Fanny's quick ear, — dipped the bulb in the boiling water. "I am so sorry, darling," she said, "but it seems to be broken. I will send for another. I'll telephone over for one!" Carefully hiding her anxiety behind a charming smile, she left the room, almost casually.

Outside the door, her face looked suddenly older, and she almost fell over the big, lazy cat, at the foot of the stairs, in her haste. Before she returned, she had cabled an urgent message to Sabina in Paris. It cost her much to turn to "Bean"; but her address was the surest; and Sabina never let the grass grow under her feet!

She smiled at Fanny again, affectionately, freshened up her pillow, and bade her try to sleep, before the visit of the local doctor.

In an incredibly short number of days — but they were endless days! — Sabina came.

She and Tante sat in the "fore room," and listened to the low, grave tones, overhead, of the nurse and the world-famous surgeon that Sabina had brought from Paris. Above these modulated tones, moulded by the utmost of human restraint, rose the absolutely uncontrolled and wandering voice of a mind that had lost its moorings.

"She took my Chan away. He can't come back. The baby can't come. They can't find me! She took him away. He can't come — and the baby can't come —"

From moment to moment, it was increasingly unendurable, to those two downstairs. Sabina crossed the room, and knelt beside Tante. "I am glad Mortie didn't make our ship," she breathed desperately.

"The very old man, — a very large and beautiful old man — he's there, to shake hands with me. But it's Chan I want — and my little baby — "

The strange effect of silence, upon which poor Fanny's unfamiliar tones fell! With the smallest farm children romping under the window; with the puppies and pigs and chickens and cows, barking and grunting and cackling and lowing, all about the house, it

seemed to Tante and Sabina as if there were no other sound on earth but that reiterant voice.

"She took my Chan away — and he can't come — and the baby can't come — they can't find the way — "

And then, something snapped. Sabina could not sit there any longer. Leaping up the stairs, and past the astonished guardians of the room, she walked rapidly over to Fanny, and spoke to her, in a voice that was impersonal and final, like the voice of Fate.

"This is Sabina. I'm bringing Chan back. I have found the way. Chan is coming, and the baby is coming. They will be here very soon, if you are quiet and sleep. Very soon. I will bring them. Now you must sleep." She leaned over, and looked steadfastly into the burning eyes.

Was it deep strangely speaking unto deep? A great pity wiped the very self out of Sabina's face, as she watched Fanny grow calm and still. She felt as if she were giving over her life to this unconscious, slender form.

"Her face was transfigured," the great surgeon said, afterwards. "I've known that

little Sabina from a baby. And it wasn't her face at all."

But Sabina, exhausted, fell into Tante's arms, with sobs that tore her strong young frame, saying: "Dear lady, she can't die, when we all love her so. We must keep her alive for Chan. We mustn't fail *him*."

XXIII

A NEW LIFE

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A NEW LIFE

WITH all the hours of birth and threatened death and passionate reunion that had befallen the old house, had one of them been more filled to the brim with the wine of gladness?

Chan flew up the worn old stairs to Fanny and her little girl.

So beautiful and pure and radiant was the face that she showed him, that he knelt beside her, with a confused murmuring, when he had planned to be quite calm and unexciting. "Darling little wifiekins!" he whispered, and pressed his face against the coppery gold braided by the uninteresting nurse's method of ending with a piece of elastic.

"Did you see?" Fanny pointed weakly toward the window.

Chan laughed — his good old honest, amused laugh, that would never submit very

long to sick room etiquette; and to hear it did Fanny more good than many hushed whispers.

"That clothes basket?" — he laughed again, and his shoulders shook the bed.

"I am afraid you will think it spoils the old house," said Fanny; "but the nurse wants a balcony built out on the south side, for the basket, and one on the north side, — for different weathers, you know — instead of a baby carriage on the street."

"Spoil the house — I should think so!" — "But don't worry," he added, as he saw the nurse's frown; "it's a fine idea, and we'll manage it someway, if we have to put the balconies in the cherry tree!"

Fanny smiled, and Chan patted her hand. "I expect to have all my notions about interiors and exteriors pushed to the wall," he went on; "but we won't do anything irreparable. And when that absurd little creature is a human being and not a little animal — which will take some time — she'll learn all about what's good in a house, and start a woman movement that will get somewhere. Can I go and look at — it?"

"Not unless you say 'her'!" said Fanny.

"Absurd little object!" Chan insisted again, after a cautious journey to the window. "But it's worth it all, isn't it, Fanny!"

The nurse beckoned at the door, and Chan nodded.

"Little Fanny?" he asked, backing out, with his eyes still feasting on Fanny's radiant look. But the tears rose to her eyes, and she turned her head away.

"No," she said, "I want her to be Elizabeth, for Mother."

"And where is Bean? Has she been a help to you?" — he tried to dry her tears by changing the subject.

"You will see what Bean is now, to all of us, that I want her, with Tante, as godmother to little Betty!" said Fanny; with a look that was full of the victory won from that difficult year: release from an old prejudice and initiation into a new sympathy.

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